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THE BURNS COUNTRY

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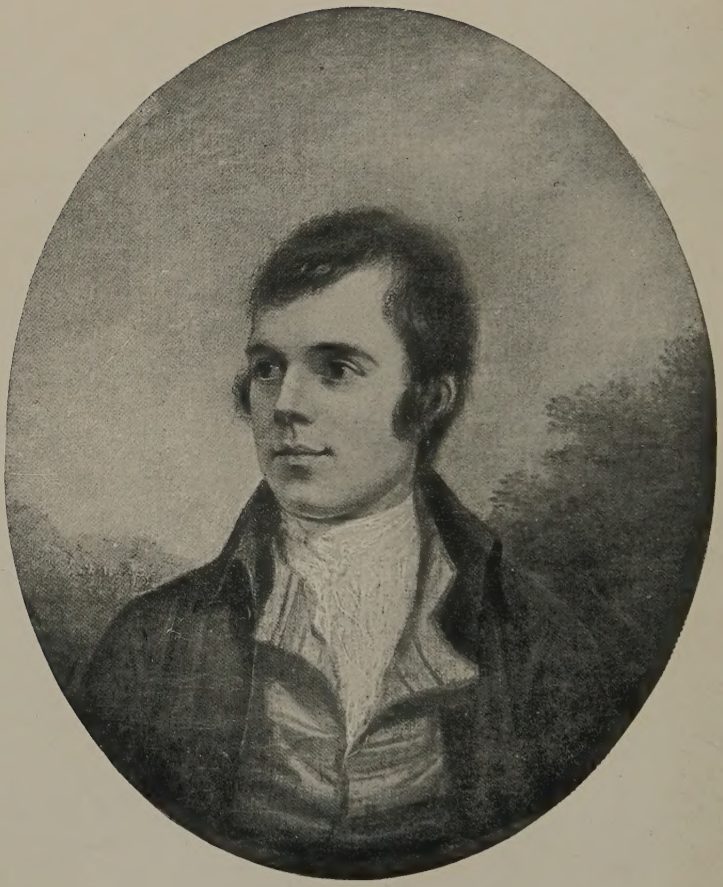

ROBERT BURNS.

From the Painting by Alexander Nasmyth in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh.

THE BURNS COUNTRY

BY

CHARLES S. DOUGALL, M.A.

HEADMASTER OF DOLLAR INSTITUTION

WITH
FORTY-EIGHT FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY
THOMAS FERGUSON

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TO

WEANS AND WIFE

"This little Valclusa Fountain will also arrest our eye: for this also is of Nature's own and most cunning workmanship, bursts from the depths of the earth, with a full gushing current, into the light of day; and often will the traveller turn aside to drink of its clear waters, and muse among its rocks and pines!"

—CARLYLE.

PREFACE

"I HAVE no dearer aim," said Burns, "than to make leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia; to sit on the fields of her battles; to wander on the romantic banks of her rivers; and to muse on the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honoured abodes of her heroes."

This volume is the result of such leisurely pilgrimages as Burns desired to make. I have wandered on the banks of the rivers and streams which owe much of their romance to him; I have visited his homes and haunts in Ayrshire and Nithsdale; and I have picked up, on the way, stories of himself and his friends, and facts and traditions concerning the people who lived and fought and suffered in his country. The land of Burns can also claim to be the land of Bruce and Wallace. It was the home of Lollards and Covenanters; it witnessed centuries of feudal strife; Galt and Boswell, Ainslie and Cunningham, Burns and Scott, are among those who have invested it with the charm of literary associations. I have tried to set down the fruits of my gleanings in this rich field simply and clearly, in the hope that those things which interested me will prove interesting to all who

share my admiration of the poet and my love for his native land.

Paterson's *History of Ayrshire and its Families* and Dr Wallace's edition of Chambers's *Burns* have been my constant companions in my travels. I owe something also to the Rev. Roderick Lawson's books on Carrick, the Rev. J. H. Pagan's *Annals of Ayr*, M'Kay's *History of Kilmarnock*, M'Dowall's *History of Dumfries*, Gray's *Nithsdale*, and *The Burns Chronicle*. I have paraphrased Blind Harry and Barbour for the stories I have given of Wallace and Bruce.

I would express my gratitude for the unfailing kindness and courtesy which have met me at every turn in my wanderings through the Burns Country. My thanks are especially due to the Rev. J. C. Higgins, Tarbolton; Mr Duncan M'Naught, Kilmaurs; the Rev. W. B. R. Wilson, Dollar; and the Rev. Walter Scott, Stirling. More than all, I am indebted to Mr Thomas Ferguson, Kilmarnock, who not only placed at my disposal the whole of his unique collection of photographs of the Burns Country, but also was at the pains to take several views expressly for this work.

CHARLES S. DOUGALL.

DOLLAR,
May 1904.

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Map of Burns Country at end of book

(*With index to places mentioned in book printed on the back*)

THE BURNS COUNTRY

CHAPTER I

AULD AYR

"Low, in a sandy valley spread,
An ancient Borough rear'd her head;
Still, as in Scottish story read,
She boasts a Race
To ev'ry nobler virtue bred,
And polish'd grace."

One naturally turns to Ayr as a starting-point for a tour in the land of Burns. It was the town of his boyhood, and it is the gateway to his country. Through the gently sloping uplands that stretch away to the east, "auld hermit Ayr" steals to the shore past many a country-seat deep set amid ancient trees. Southward, the Doon "pours down his far-fetch'd floods," sweeping past Kirk Alloway and the "auld clay biggin" in which Burns was born. The seaward view is magnificent. From the Mull of Cantire, past the mighty mass of Arran, round by Bute and the Cumbraes, and down along the coast, with its busy towns—Ardrossan, Saltcoats, Irvine, Troon—on to the bold Heads of Ayr, seems one un-

broken line. Far off, a clear eye may catch a glimpse of the Irish Coast, and the black bulk of Ailsa is set between, like an enormous watch-tower in the middle of the wide lane of waters, Scotland's great highway of commerce.

It is not surprising that a town in such a situation should have become a fashionable place of residence. It lies on the outskirts of a golfer's paradise; it is neither so large that one is in danger of losing one's identity in it, nor so small that one cannot repel the advances of inquisitive neighbours; its manufactures, though important, are not obtrusive, the most objectionable public works, from the point of view of a resident, being confined to the north side of the river. Moreover, it is a town with an enormous wealth of historic associations. Romans and Norsemen knew it; Wallace and Bruce were its frequent visitors; and Knox and Welsh preached from its pulpits.

Auld Ayr is proud of her sons. She prefers a doubtful claim to Erigena (Johannes Scotus), foremost among the writers of the Middle Ages. There is no doubt about her claim to Andrew Ramsay, named the Chevalier, tutor to bonnie Prince Charlie, and author of *The Travels of Cyrus*. John Loudon MacAdam, whose method of road-making gave a new word to the English tongue, was born in Ayr. In her ancient and excellent Academy were trained not a few of the greatest ornaments of the Scottish Bar, as in more recent days was also the author of *The House with the Green Shutters*. She has produced a host of local bards and historians, of whom the last, the author of the *Kings of*

Carrick, is not the least. She is proud of General Neill, her hero of the Mutiny, "who fell gloriously at the relief of Lucknow," as is set forth on the statue to his honour, which stands opposite that of Lord Eglinton in Wellington Square. She is proud, too, of those who upheld her fair name in South Africa, to whom the other day she erected a monument, bearing the appropriate inscription —words spoken by Burns of Wallace:

> "Ye babbling winds, in silence sleep,
> Disturb not ye the hero's sleep."

Proudest of all her memories are those of Robert Burns. Hither, on fine Sundays, a dark-eyed, serious-faced lad of six or seven, he trotted by his father's side to worship in the Auld Kirk that still stands between the High Street and the Water of Ayr. During the twelve years he spent at Mount Oliphant, he paid the town many a visit. He says himself: "My vicinity to Ayr was a great advantage to me." Even from Mossgiel, some ten miles distant, Burns, now a man of mark in the county, found time to ride across to Ayr. It is easy to picture such a visit—the start in the early morning, the ride down through Tarbolton, along the slopes of the valley, and across the Auld Brig into the town. Some buying and selling has first to be done in the Mealmarket at the bend of the High Street, or up at the Fauldbacks; and then he is free to call on his lawyer friends. He looks into M'Whinnie's office; he has a longer stay with Willie Chalmers, whose love-suit, he is proud to hear, has prospered since, for friendship's sake,

Burns's day. Harbour and docks have usurped the place of the "Ratton-key"; the town has become an important railway centre; electric tramways join Prestwick Cross to the Brig o' Doon; new streets have arisen to cover the sandy knowes that used to stretch along the shore; lines of cottages and villas run along every highway where once was dyke or hedgerow; nearly all the old landmarks—the Tolbooth with its Dungeon clock, the Mealmarket, the Fish and Malt Crosses, and the "Auld Toure"—have been swept away. The open space on which travellers emerge from the railway station was then a market-stance where "horse-coupers" were wont to drive their hard bargains. Now it is occupied by a statue recently erected to the memory of the Scots Fusiliers who fell in South Africa, and by the Burns Statue, the work of George A. Lawson. In deep meditation, with arms folded across his breast, the poet surveys the country which in life he knew so well, the earnestness of his gaze, and the seriousness of his expression, suggesting what he may have seemed when Coila

> "Saw thee leave their ev'ning joys,
> And lonely stalk,
> To vent thy bosom's swelling rise,
> In pensive walk."

The High Street is at once the most important, the oldest, and the most picturesque street in Ayr. It is a street in which electric light and electric tramways seem strange intruders. Soon its thatched roofs, its pointed gables, and its old-world irregularity will be things of the past; but, fortunately, all are not yet gone.

HIGH STREET, AYR.

Near the head of the street is the Tam o' Shanter Inn, in which Tam and the Souter used to

> ". . . sit bousing at the nappy,
> An' getting fou and unco happy."

An oil-painting above the door represents the setting forth of Tam on his eventful journey to his home across the Doon. Apparently his friends were anxious to see him off in safety, for Souter, Landlady, and Landlord all appear in the picture. The house has changed but little since the days when it was the last "ca'-hoose" of travellers setting out through the Kyle port, the eastern exit of the "ancient borough." Inside, a modern bar has taken the place of the cosy parlour in which,

> "Ae market-night,
> Tam had got planted unco right,
> Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,
> Wi' reaming swats that drank divinely;
> And at his elbow, Souter Johnie,
> His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony."

Still the low ceilings, the narrow stair, and the dimly-lit rooms speak of time long gone; and over its floors have passed the feet of tens of thousands of lovers of Burns, who did not doubt that this was the very house in which the cronies were wont to meet, and who were not too critical concerning the identity of the chairs in which they are said to have sat, or of the caups from which they are said to have quaffed the "reaming swats."

A little lower down the street there stands a handsome Gothic tower, known as the Wallace Tower. Except that it carries a statue of that

heroic warrior—a statue that does but little credit to the sculptor of Tam o' Shanter and Souter Johnny—there seems no adequate reason for the name. This tower has taken the place of the "Auld Toure," or Wallace Tower, which swore "the fact was true" when "the drowsy Dungeon clock had numbered two." It is impossible to tell when or why the old Wallace Tower was built; but it was so time-worn in 1836 that it would not stand repairing, and it was therefore taken down. The name would imply that it was connected with the Laigh Tolbooth, from which Blind Harry says the apparently lifeless body of Wallace was thrown on to a "draff midden." As the Laigh Tolbooth is known to have been on the opposite side of the street, one must conclude that the name is due to the desire to have some memorial of Wallace in the town which was the scene of so many of his doughty deeds.

The Dungeon clock occupied the steeple of the Old Tolbooth, which stood in the Sandgate, a name reminiscent of the days when sand storms threatened to bury the town of Ayr. Doubtless up the nineteen steps of the Old Tolbooth there marched many a trembling culprit, apprehensive of his doom, and many a bold ruffian, defiant of his fate. Still it was not always a place of cheerless gloom, if one can draw any conclusion from an enactment of the magistrates in 1695, that "Prisoners within the Tolbooth (be) dischargit from holding any feasting, treat, or banquet within the prison, and that no persons above the number of one shall be allowed to dine or sup with any such prisoner."

AULD BRIG, AYR. *Page* 10.

The Sandgate leads past the modern Town Buildings, the graceful spire of which is the lineal descendant of the Ayr steeple, on to the New Bridge, connecting the old town with the new. The Newton grows bigger and busier every year, but its name is misleading. It is older than the time of Wallace, and its freemen claim their peculiar privileges as a reward for the mighty acts their fathers wrought on the field of Bannockburn. Not a stone is left of its castle, which was famous enough in its day, and which is interesting to us as one of the homes of the ancestors of Burns's friend, Mrs Dunlop. "Peebles, frae the water-fit," a victim of Burns's satire in the "Holy Fair" and the "Kirk's Alarm," was minister of Newtown. He was a leader against Dr M'Gill, and a poet not above perpetrating a mixed metaphor—"bound in Liberty's endearing chain"—all of which was duly remembered by Burns :

> "Poet Willie! Poet Willie!
> Gie the doctor a volley
> Wi' your 'liberty's chain' and your wit."

Not a few notable men have succeeded Dr Peebles in the ministry of Newton-on-Ayr. We need name only the late Principal Caird of Glasgow University, whom to know was to love and admire; and Dr Wallace, afterwards of Greyfriars, Edinburgh, and editor of the *Scotsman*, whose witty speeches used to delight the House of Commons.

The present bridge is a newer "New Brig" than that of Burns's poem, for the prophecy of the sprite "who upreared his airy

shape" above the Auld Brig has been amply fulfilled:

"Conceited gowk! puff'd up wi' windy pride!
This monie a year I've stood the flood an' tide;
And tho' wi' crazy eild I'm sair forfairn,
I'll be a brig when ye're a shapeless cairn!"

Almost thirty years ago the New Brig showed unmistakable signs of giving way, and the present bridge, which has had since to be strengthened and repaired, was built.

A little higher up the river, the Auld Brig stretches its four lofty, old-fashioned arches across to Wallacetown. Before its erection, travellers crossed the Ayr by one of four fords, of which the most famous was the Doo-cot ford, just above the bridge. Hence the allusion:

"There's men of taste would tak' the Ducat stream,
Tho' they should cast the vera sark and swim,
Ere they would grate their feelings wi' the view
O' sic an ugly, Gothic hulk as you."

Nor was the swimming always unnecessary. Then, as now, the Ayr was subject to sudden floods,

"When heavy, dark, continued a'-day rains,
Wi' deepening deluges o'erflow the plains;
When from the hills where springs the brawling Coil,
Or stately Lugar's mossy fountains boil,
Or where the Greenock winds his moorland course,
Or haunted Garpal draws his feeble source,
Arous'd by blustering winds an' spotting thowes;
In many a torrent down the snaw-broo rowes;
While crashing ice, borne on the roaring spate,
Sweeps dams, an' mills, an' brigs, a' to the gate;
And from Glenbuck, down to the Ratton-key,
Auld Ayr is just one lengthen'd, tumbling sea."

Tradition has it that among those who lost their lives in attempting the Doo-cot ford in a spate were two youths, on their way to greet their sweethearts in Ayr. The ladies were sisters, named Lowe, and in their long years of loneliness the happy idea struck them that they could achieve a triple object—a memorial to their lovers, a monument to themselves, and a safeguard to others—by bequeathing their fortune to erect a bridge over the water which had brought them so sad a fate. This may or may not be true. The rude, weather-worn carving which appears on a stone in the eastern parapet may or may not have been a representation of the heads of the faithful donors. It is impossible to fix the date of the bridge. The figures 1252, which are cut in the upper parapet, strengthen the conjecture that it was built in the thirteenth century, but it is more probable that the Auld Brig was not erected until two hundred years later. In any case, it is a venerable structure of much archæological value and beauty, as well as of great historic interest.

In 1904, it was declared unsafe and was closed to traffic. In the following year, the Town Council of Ayr resolved to take down the old bridge and build a new one. The destruction of this oldest of all the monuments to him who sang of "the sprites that o'er the Brigs of Ayr preside," was strenuously opposed by Lord Rosebery, Mr R. A. Oswald of Auchencruive, Mr James A. Morris, the officials of the Burns Federation, and many others. The Town Council agreed to delay proceedings until an appeal had been made for funds to carry out the work of preserving the

bridge in its original form. An appeal was made; the necessary money was subscribed by admirers of Burns; and the restoration of the Auld Brig was successfully effected. On 29th July 1910, Lord Rosebery formally re-opened the bridge, and to-day it stands as "teughly doure" and able to "bide an unco bang" as ever it was.

No one will dispute the claim of Ayr to the title "ancient." It is probable that before the Romans came to these islands there was a rude settlement of warlike Celts at this spot where at that time two rivers ran into the sea. Thus doubtless it was that the Romans made it the terminus of the road they built from Galloway to the shores of Clyde. The credible history of Ayr may be said to date from the end of the twelfth century, when Scotland's Lion King raised it to the dignity of a royal burgh, that it might be in keeping with the *new* castle which he had built there. So there must have been an old castle, perhaps too weak to withstand the attacks of hardy Norsemen from the sea or of wild Galwegians from the south. King William's new castle has disappeared. Even its site is doubtful. Still, it bore a part in Scottish history for many years. Haco of Norway made an attempt to storm it; Percy held it in the days of the disputed succession to the Scottish throne; according to Blind Harry, at the burning of the barns of Ayr, "Boyd wan the port, entryt, and all his men," and put the small garrison to the sword; Robert Bruce was for a time its governor—he gave it to the flames rather than surrender it to the English. They rebuilt it, and in it Aymer de Valence found shelter after his

defeat at Loudoun Hill. It resisted every desperate assault by the Scots, and did not pass into their hands until Bannockburn decided that every Scottish keep should be kept by Scotsmen. Thrice before the stormy days of the fourteenth century had run their course, Englishmen made themselves its masters. Whatever stones of it were left standing in 1652 were utilised to build Cromwell's Fort of Ayr.

It may be that the burgh seal, with its three castles and its symbols of the Baptist, is meant to commemorate the fact that the Church of St John the Baptist and the castle stood side by side, if indeed they were not built at the same time. Of this venerable church there are two interesting relics preserved in Ayr—one, an obit book, into which antiquaries delight to dip; the other, the square tower of St John's, much the oldest building in or about the town. The upper storey and the adjacent buildings are comparatively modern; but the tower itself must have been standing for some seven hundred years. What a story it could tell if it had speech —stories of strife and bloodshed, of fierce conflicts between Norseman and Scot, between Englishman and Scot, and even between Scot and Scot! It would tell of a day when, within the walls of the old church, there gathered the most brilliant assembly Ayr had ever seen—all Scotland's noblest and bravest met to determine the succession to the throne, should a male heir be denied to the hero of Bannockburn. It saw arise, within the town, first the monastery of the Black Friars, and then that of the Grey Friars; and it saw them fall together, when, urged on by

the eloquence of John Willock, and led by Campbell of Kinzeancleuch, the burgesses of Ayr resolved

> "They would not suffer God his glore,
> In their bounds thralled any more ;
> . . . . .
> So for to damme that devillish messe,
> That Papists could them not suppresse ;
> Then Queers and cloisters were puld down,
> In sundrie parts of this Regioun."

It must have trembled for its own safety when, the monasteries thrown down, the Reformers advanced to St John's itself. Fortunately, sane counsels prevailed. The mob contented itself with despoiling the altars, destroying the organ, and everything that seemed to savour of Popish superstition. Now the Auld Kirk stands on the site of the Grey Friars' Monastery, and only the Friars' Well, the waters of which ooze through the churchyard wall, preserves the ancient name. The place of the home of the Black Friars is occupied by a brewery. The only name reminiscent of them is "The Doo-cot Ford," the way to which passed by the friars' pigeon-house.

After the Reformation, John Knox preached at least once in the Church of St John's, and his son-in-law, John Welsh, scarcely less resolute than Knox himself, occupied its pulpit for five years. Welsh was born about 1570, in the parish of Dunscore, another place with Burns associations. After a short experience of life among the Border raiders, he was glad to settle down to lessons at Dumfries, and in due course he was licensed to preach in Kirkcudbright. Plain speaking against King James in the High

Church of Edinburgh led to his being outlawed, but he had sufficient influence to secure forgiveness and permission to return to his charge in Kirkcudbright. In 1600 he was chosen to assist the minister of Ayr, and he soon made his presence felt. Kennedys, Campbells, Crawfords, and Cunninghames were the cause of continual strife and bloody conflicts in the streets of the town, and Welsh set himself to put an end to their quarrellings. He used to rush between two opposing parties, his head covered for protection, but bearing no weapon, that all might see he came for peace. When some measure of quiet had been restored, he "caused cover a table in the street, and there brought the enemies together, and beginning with prayer, he persuaded them to profess themselves friends, and then to eat and drink together; and so he ended the bloody quarrels." Brave, eloquent, and devout, Welsh completely won his way to the hearts of his people; and when, for taking part in a General Assembly of the Kirk at Aberdeen without the sanction of his majesty, he was committed to the Castle of Blackness, "and mair straitly used nor aither Jesuites or murtherers," the town council voted £10 "to the minister's wyf to pay her expenses in ganging to her husband at ye Blackness." Welsh and his associates were condemned to banishment for life, and for sixteen long years he preached the doctrines of the Reformed faith in various continental towns. At length his health began to fail. He pined to see his own land; he wished to die at home. Along with his heroic wife, he came to London to petition the king. His wife was admitted to the

royal presence, and fervently she pleaded that her husband might be allowed to return to Scotland.

"Who was your father?" asked the king.

"John Knox," she answered.

"Knox and Welsh! The devil never made sic a match as that."

"It's right like, sir, for we never speered his advice."

At last, with an oath, the ungallant monarch said, "If you will persuade your husband to submit to the bishops, he shall have my permission."

Like her father's daughter, she replied, "Please your Majesty, I had rather kep his head there," and she held out her apron towards the Sovereign. That same year (1622), Welsh died in London.

In 1652 Cromwell made Ayr a garrison town, and ordered the erection of a huge fort there. The burgesses resented his choice of a site, but they were powerless. They saw their old church turned into an armoury, and the graves of their forefathers desecrated. Their only consolation was, that the difficulty of finding a sure foundation on the sand made the work of building the fort so costly that Cromwell asked if it had been made of silver. The fort was dismantled in 1660, but some parts of the wall, rough and rugged like those who built it, can be seen to this day. The church stood for some years longer, and was even used again as a place of worship. It was taken down in 1726, and its stones were used in building the steeple which crowned the Old Tolbooth in the Sandgate. As a substitute for St John's Church, there was built in 1655 the present Auld Kirk, towards the cost

AUCHINCRUIVE. *Page* 23.

of which Cromwell contributed 1000 merks. Plain and substantial, it seems likely to stand for many a year to come.

Since Burns's day, the old church has been reseated and otherwise internally changed, and thus it is needless to look for the pew in which he sat. Upon the walls hang the tattered colours of the Scots Fusiliers; and above the "sailors' loft" is suspended a second successor to the ship which, in 1662, some of the seamen, pretending to have "power and warrant from the Magistrates," hung above their gallery. When brought to book for daring to take such a liberty, they made humble apology, and pleaded that, "as the said schip was now taken down by authoritie, the Counsell wold be pleised for upputing of the said schip by thair power and authoritie." The magistrates having asserted their rights, seem to have been satisfied. The ship was restored to its place.

William Adair was minister of Ayr at the time of the building of the Auld Kirk, and his memory is preserved in the monument "betwixt the twa laigh windowes on the east syd of the isle." There he is represented in an attitude of prayer, recalling the day when he stood on the Auld Brig and petitioned that the plague might not come nigh the dwellings of his people. He was an extreme protester, and on more than one occasion he was deposed from his charge. At length, after a ministry of forty-three years, his refusal to take the Test led to his final deposition. He died in 1684, out of harness. Adair is believed to have taken a principal part in the execution of the Ayr witch, Maggie Osborne,

who is wrongly supposed to have been the last person burned for witchcraft in Scotland. "The Osborne Bar," in High Street, preserves her name. Whether one believes Maggie to have been a saint or a fiend, depends on the version of the tradition respecting her which one accepts as true.

In the time of Burns, the minister of the Auld Kirk was Dr William Dalrymple. He baptized Burns, and his pure simplicity is commended in "The Kirk's Alarm":

> "D'rymple mild! D'rymple mild!
> Though your heart's like a child,
> And your life like the new-driven snaw."

He was a native of Ayr; a man of great personal worth, of extreme kindness of heart, and of weight in the Church, as is evidenced by his appointment to the Moderatorship of the General Assembly in 1781. That William Burnes thought highly of him, we know from Ramsay of Ochtertyre, who had Burns's authority for saying that his father "was so much pleased with that gentleman's strain of preaching and benevolent conduct, that he embraced his religious opinions."

Beside Dr Dalrymple, in the old churchyard, lies his friend and colleague, Dr M'Gill, born on a Wigtownshire farm which is occupied by M'Gills to-day. He was responsible for the "heretic blast" which was "blawn i' the wast," and was therefore a "particular friend" of Robert Burns.

> "Doctor Mac! Doctor Mac!
> Ye should stretch on a rack,
> To strike wicked Writers wi' terror;
> To join faith and sense,
> Upon any pretence,
> Was heretic damnable error."

Fortunately, this is not the place in which to expound the shades of difference between the Auld Licht and the New, or to tell again the story of the struggle between Calvinism and Socinianism. From the days of the Lollards of Kyle, Ayrshire men have always been in the van of any progressive movement; and in his *Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ*, Dr M'Gill advanced so far from the strict Calvinism of his time, that some of his brethren charged him with heresy. The attack was led by his former friend, William Peebles, minister of Newton-on-Ayr; Dun of Auchinleck pressed on the case; and in the end it went before the General Assembly. That council contented itself with recommending that the Presbytery of Ayr should see that purity of doctrine was preserved within its bounds. An explanation and apology by M'Gill finally satisfied his critics, and he continued in his charge at Ayr until his death, in 1807. Burns writes of him that he was "one of the worthiest, as well as one of the ablest, of the whole priesthood of the Kirk of Scotland." An enthusiastic golfer on the links at Prestwick, something of a Stoic and a humorist, he was held in high esteem by the people of Ayr. The magistrates petitioned in his favour when his case was before the Assembly, and in the dry pages of the Old Statistical Account it is recorded that "The legal stipend of his [Dr Dalrymple's] colleague would scarcely amount to £75; but, from regard to him [Dr M'Gill] who at present fills the charge, the magistrates and council, besides allowance for a house, have added a sum which makes his stipend £105."

Among the many generations of Ayr's sons and daughters who sleep in the old churchyard, there lie together seven strangers; yet, strangers though they be, the Incorporated Trades of the town have erected a monument to their memories. It happened thus. When the Covenanters were hopelessly defeated at Rullion Green in 1665, some hundred of them were taken prisoners and sent to various parts of the country to be tried. Twelve were sent to Ayr; all were found guilty, and sentenced to be hanged. Two of the condemned men were sent to Dumfries, and two to Irvine. Eight were retained in Ayr to await their doom; but the hangman of the town, either because he feared the people, or because he was unwilling to take an active part in such a wholesale execution, fled. The authorities appealed to Irvine for assistance; but, in spite of threats and promises, the hangman of that town refused the hateful task. At length the council, to get out of a difficulty, offered his life to any one of the prisoners who would despatch the others. The only Ayr man among them, one Anderson, a tailor, was base enough to accept their offer. Even his heart was like to fail him on the day appointed; but a copious supply of brandy gave him traitor courage, and he did the work. The monument bears the inscription:—

"Here lie seven Martyrs for our Covenants,
A sacred number of triumphant Saints.
Pontius M'Adam the unjust sentence past,
What is his own the world will know at last;
And Herod Drummond caused their Heads affix,
Heaven keeps a record of the sixty-six;
Boots, thumbkins, gibbets, were in fashon then,
Lord, let us never see such Days again."

CHAPTER II

WALLACE IN AYRSHIRE

"At Wallace' name, what Scottish blood
But boils up in a spring-tide flood?
Oft have our fearless fathers strode
By Wallace' side,
Still pressing onward, red-wat-shod,
Or glorious died."

From Loudoun Hill to Turnberry, Ayrshire abounds in memories of the struggle for Scottish independence. Though Wallace was not born in Ayrshire, Kyle was the country of his ancestors, Wallaces and Crawfords; to Kyle he turned when danger threatened him; there he did the deeds which proved his power to lead; and "King of Kyle" was the mock title bestowed on him by knights and nobles jealous of his governorship. Wallace is Scotland's popular hero. Human sympathies ever go out to the brave unfortunate, and Wallace's countrymen regard him as a martyr to their cause. There was a time when the story of his life and death, as it is told in Hamilton of Gilbertfield's setting of Blind Harry's *Acts and Deeds of the Illustrious and Valiant Champion*, or in some prose version thereof, was the possession of every Scottish

schoolboy. It was one of Robert Burns's first books. "The story of Wallace," he said "poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins which will boil along there till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest." Nowadays Harry the Minstrel is discredited. We have learned to doubt those traditions, which had lived and not unnaturally grown during the two hundred years between their origin and his singing them. With his perfervid patriotism, his manifest exaggerations, and his indifference to chronology, Blind Harry was no historian. He was, however, a capital story-teller, and he has given to Ayrshire woods and streams an interest which was real enough to Robert Burns.

The banks of the Irvine witnessed Wallace's first adventure in Ayrshire. He was living at Riccarton with his uncle, Sir Richard Wallace, and had gone to enjoy a day's fishing on the Water of Irvine. Sport was good, and he scarcely noticed Percy as he passed on his way from Ayr to Glasgow. Five covetous fellows clad in green rode aside, however, to see what was in the fisherman's basket. They found it filled with brown trout, which they demanded for the table of their lord. Wallace offered them part, but would not surrender all, and when one of them attempted to take them by force, Wallace picked up his net-pole, the only weapon he had, and

> ". . . with it fast on the cheek him took
> With such good-will that off his feet he shook;
> The sword flew from him a furlong on the land,
> Wallace was glad, and had it soon in hand."

It proved a trusty weapon. Three of the five fell before it. The other two did not stay to try

its mettle. It is said that until nearly the middle of last century, a thorn tree—"the bickering buss" —marked the scene of the encounter. It grew on the banks of the Irvine, near a farm called Maxholm, but there is no trace of it now.

Dreading that this might bring trouble upon his uncle at Riccarton, Wallace withdrew to Auchincruive, where dwelt a Wallace, who "welcummyt him full weill." Here, on the banks of the Ayr, in the Laglyne Woods, whose "covert of trees saved him full weill," he could defy his foes. Five hundred years later there came to this same wood a young lad from Mount Oliphant, "with as much devotion as ever did pilgrim to Loretto"; and as he explored every den and dell where he could suppose his heroic countryman to have lodged, he promised himself that some day he would "make a song on him in some measure equal to his merits." Perhaps that promise was not kept, unless "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled" was its partial fulfilment; but it was prompted by the spirit which led him to sing, "for puir auld Scotland's sake," so many songs, that his name will go down through the ages along with that of his hero, symbolising and typifying Scottish patriotism.

Auchincruive is beautifully situated on the Ayr, a few miles from the county town. It is known from old charters that the estate was held by Wallaces during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. From them it passed to the Cathcart family, in whose possession it remained for very many years. About 1760, Auchincruive was purchased from the Cathcarts by Richard Oswald, whose widow was the subject of one of Burns's

fiercest satires. On a stormy night in January 1789, the poet was driven from his comfortable corner by Bailie Whigham's fire in Sanquhar, to make room for the funeral cortege of Mrs Oswald on its way to St Quivox. He had not known the lady, but he had heard that she was unpopular with her servants, and, in revenge for the discomfort which he had to bear, he composed on his way across the moor to New Cumnock that terrible invective, "Dweller in yon dungeon dark." In Dumfries, Burns came to know Richard Alexander Oswald, the grand-nephew of the purchaser of Auchincruive. He is the "wealthy young Richard" of the Election Ballads, whose "fine fortune, pleasing exterior, amiable disposition, and ingenious, upright mind" excited the poet's envy and admiration. Nothing charmed him more than "Mr Oswald's unconcealable attachment to that incomparable woman" his wife. In her honour Burns wrote the charming song, "O, wat ye wha's in yon toun?" and to a tune of her composing, "Thou ling'ring star," was set in Johnson's *Museum*. This "incomparable woman" was Lucy Johnston, daughter of Mr Wynne Johnston of Hylton. She died of consumption at Lisbon in 1798, when she was little over thirty years of age.

While Wallace found "a silent and a safe retreat" in Laglyne Wood, he could not deny himself the pleasure of an occasional visit to Ayr. It was a lively place on market days, and it was the breath of life to him to take part in stirring scenes. It pleased him well to find a strong man —an Englishman, of course—boasting of his prowess, and offering for the paltry consideration

AULD BRIG O' DOON. *Page* 34.

of one groat to bear upon his back the heartiest blow a Scot could deal. The generous Wallace offered him treble his price; the offer was accepted; the blow was dealt, and

> "The carle was dede; of him I spek na mar."

Harry was fond of this story, and told it twice. In the second account the victim was a buckler-player, whose shield did little to stay a blow so generous that

> "Throuch bukler, hand, and the harnpan also,
> To the schulderis, the scharp suerd gert he go."

After deeds like these, Wallace had to fight his way out of the town; and as a rule he seems to have found it quite an enjoyable task. Once, however, it proved too much for him. Brawls on market days were becoming so serious that Percy sent eighty soldiers from the castle to preserve the peace. Wallace came as usual to market, and a little difficulty with Percy's steward—again about fish, by the way—led to the steward's death. Thereupon fourscore spearmen surrounded the hero, and, after his sword had broken at the hilt and reinforcements had come from the castle, he was borne down by sheer weight of numbers, and carried in triumph a prisoner to the Tolbooth. How he was fed on "barrell heryng and watter" until his strength was spent; how he was thought to be dead, and thrown from the wall of the Tolbooth; how his old nurse in Newton-on-Ayr brought him back to life; and how he was able in a few weeks to find his way to Riccarton, with the horses and belongings of a few Englishmen whom he had

met and despatched on the way—all will be found faithfully recorded in the pages of Harry the Minstrel. A statue of Wallace, placed in a niche in the wall of the house which stands on the site of the Old Tolbooth in High Street, is evidence that some one had faith in Harry's veracity.

Wallace's most notable exploit in the town of Ayr was "The Burning of the Barns." It seems impossible to fix the site of these barns, which were "biggyt without the toun." The name Barns Street is evidently meant to suggest their situation. The whole subject of the burning of the barns was exhaustively dealt with by the late Lord Bute. What follows is a paraphrase of Blind Harry's account.

Wallace's uncle, Sir Ronald Crawford, Sheriff of Ayr, lived at Corsby, between Largs and Ardrossan. Here Wallace was his guest when news was brought that their presence was required at a Court of Assize which the Governor of Ayr proposed to hold. Under a "treaty of peace," their personal safety was guaranteed. Early on the morning of the day appointed, they set out on their long ride along the coast. At Kingcase, Wallace remembered that they had left their safe-conduct behind at Corsby, and he returned for it, while Sir Ronald rode on to Ayr. They never met again. One by one as the Scottish knights arrived, they were led along the narrow passage to the Barns of Ayr. As each one entered the building, a noose was swiftly fixed about his neck, and he was drawn up to the roof. Thus ignominiously perished Sir Ronald Crawford, Sir Bryce Blair, Sir Hew Montgomery, and many more of Wallace's

friends—Crawfords, Campbells, Kennedys, Boyds, Berkeleys, and Stuarts. Late in the afternoon Wallace came to Ayr and heard the dismal news. Already the murderers were preparing to celebrate the success of their vile plot by a drunken revel within the barns. Mad with grief and rage, Wallace saw a way to wreak vengeance upon them. By midnight he had gathered together men enough to surround the barns. The doors were fastened tight with withes from Laglyne Wood. Within, the false Governor and his friends were asleep in intoxication. Faintly the crackling of fire was borne upon their ears. Then the roar of flames and the crash of falling walls roused them from their slumbers. It was too late. The few who escaped from the burning ruins fell before the swords of the pitiless Scots outside. The small garrison issued from the castle to succour their friends; but Robert Boyd was on the watch for them, and they swelled the number of the slain. The contagion of murder spread to the peaceful monastery of the Dominicans. There seven score Englishmen had taken up their quarters, and the prior determined to rid himself of his unwelcome guests. From room to room, with drawn swords in their hands, he and his seven brethren passed. Even those who were not murdered in their sleep did not escape. In their wild rush from immediate danger, they plunged madly into the river:

> "Drownèd and slain were all that harboured there,
> Men call it yet, 'The Friars' Blessing of Ayr.'"

Wallace was now recognised as the leader of

the popular patriotic party, and men, resolute like himself, began to gather round him. At Loudoun Hill, with fifty of these he attacked and routed a much larger body of Englishmen who were convoying stores to the garrison at Ayr. Fenwick, the leader of the English party, was killed, and Wallace thus avenged the death of his father, who had been slain in a previous encounter with Fenwick. According to Blind Harry, Wallace made a raid into Carrick, where he found Turnberry Castle insufficiently guarded. He set fire to the fort, but

> "A priest thar was and gentill wemen with in,
> Quhilk for the fyr maid hiddewis noyis and dyn.
> 'Mercy,' thai cryit, 'for Him that deit on tre':
> Wallace gert slaik the fyr, and leit thaim be."

He had no war with priests and women.

He now made Cumnock his headquarters for some time. Success bred success. The opposition to English rule became so formidable that Surrey, who acted for Edward I. in his Majesty's absence in Flanders, sent Percy and Clifford with 40,000 men to put down the insurrection. The Scots were drawn up on the banks of the Irvine, and a battle seemed imminent, when the great majority of the Scottish leaders made humble submission to Edward. They had estates in England which they feared to lose. They had private quarrels which they could not forget, and selfish ambitions which they would not sink. Thereafter Wallace and his early associates left Ayrshire and went towards the North, where their strength increased so rapidly that only two months later (September 1297) the Battle of Stirling Bridge was fought and won.

During the seven years which elapsed between the Battle of Falkirk and his capture, Wallace doubtless wandered among the hills and glens of Ayrshire, but one cannot hope to trace his steps. The standard which he had held aloft so valiantly was now to pass into the hands of Robert Bruce.

CHAPTER III

TAM O' SHANTER'S RIDE

"Nae man can tether time or tide—
The hour approaches Tam maun ride;
That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane,
That dreary hour Tam mounts his beast in,
And sic a night he taks the road in,
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in."

NOWADAYS electric cars make the way from Ayr to Alloway easy for the tens of thousands of visitors who come to view what one might call the show places of the land of Burns. It would be interesting to know what brings this throng of travellers. Doubtless some come from idle curiosity, some because other people come, some that they may say they have seen the monument and the birthplace of Burns, some to spend a pleasant day in a pleasant spot, and some because they love and admire the poet whose simple "wood-notes wild" find a way to hearts which the mightier Shakespeare and the more majestic Milton cannot reach.

Since modern visitors need no guide, we are free to follow Tam o' Shanter in his memorable ride from Ayr to the Brig of Doon on that dark, stormy night when "the Deil had business on his

hand." The present highway was not then in existence. The land along the shore between the Ayr and Doon was an unenclosed waste of sandy knolls and broken ground, overgrown with bent and whins. "Weel mounted on his grey mare, Meg," Tam left his "howff" in the High Street, and rode along the Carrick Vennel. At the end of the street he turned to the left, and "skelpit on thro' dub and mire" until he came to what is now the Racecourse. There the way was difficult, and the fury of the blast raged round him. The Slaphouse Burn—it was then the Curtecan—was in full flood; but the lightning gleams disclosed to faithful Meg the path which led across the moor past the ruins of the old church of St Leonard's to the ford, "whare in the snaw the chapman smoor'd," and she brought her "glorious" master safe across. As a rule, the burn is quite insignificant, but when in spate, its passage was difficult enough for a pedestrian. The story goes, that on a certain 25th of January, William Burnes rode from Alloway to Ayr for assistance to bring a child into the world. At the ford across the Curtecan he found an old woman afraid to cross. With something of the courtesy which his son inherited, he turned back to help her across the stream. Perhaps he told her his errand. At any rate, when he returned to the cottage he found the gypsy woman sitting by his wife's bed, in order that she might "spae" the fortune of the babe.

"The gossip keekit in his loof,
Quo' scho, 'Wha lives will see the proof,
This waly boy will be nae coof,
I think we'll ca' him Robin.'"

Tam was now on an eerie spot. The ruins of St Leonard's may not have harboured ghosts; the wraith of the poor wretch who "brak's neckbane" over the "meikle stane," which is still to be seen, may not have troubled travellers; but did Tam not know that here the "Auchendrane Tragedy" began, when the Laird of Culzean was done to death by friends of Mure and Bargany, who lay concealed, perhaps among those very birks, until their unsuspecting victim was within their power?

The path continued to be difficult. Where now are cultivated fields, it passed between a morass and rough ground covered with gorse and brushwood, the site of some ancient battle, of which the only record was the cairn "whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn." The cairn has been opened up, and the urns which it contained have been removed. What is left of it can still be seen surrounding a solitary tree in front of the mansion-house of Cambusdoon. From the cairn Tam's road went on towards the Doon, until he was

> ". . . near the thorn, aboon the well,
> Whare Mungo's mither hang'd hersel'."

It may be that Betty Davidson, the old woman from whom Burns derived his knowledge of witches and warlocks, was responsible for the story of "Mungo's mither." St Mungo was the patron saint of Alloway, and Betty, knowing nothing of patron saints, would be at no loss to invent a tale to explain why this should have been called Mungo's Well. The waters of the well bubbled forth until quite recently; but

ALLOWAY MONUMENT. *Page* 35.

the excavations in connection with the railway which was recently constructed to run along the shore from Ayr to Girvan have destroyed the springs that fed it, and the well is now no more than a name.

Tam was now between the Kirk and the river.

> "Before him Doon pours all his floods;
> The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;
> The lightnings flash from pole to pole;
> Near and more near the thunders roll:
> When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
> Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze."

A few steps to the left brought the terrified Meg close to the Kirk, and through an opening in the south wall "Tam saw an unco sight." Only from the south could he have seen the "winnock bunker in the east," where "sat Auld Nick, in shape o' beast." There is but one description of that "unco sight"—the description given by Robert Burns. Every one has read how "Tammie glowr'd, amazed, and curious," while the dancers

> ". . . reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,
> Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,
> And coost her duddies to the wark,
> And linkit at it in her sark";

and how, at last, with Nannie's capers, "Tam tint his reason a'thegither," and with his cry of "Weel-dune, cutty-sark!" brought forth the "hellish legion." It was but a few strides to the Brig of Doon, and valiantly did the gallant Meg strive to win the "key-stane," beyond which safety lay. She needs must slacken

speed for one second to take that sharp turn in the darkness, and the quick ascent checks her for a second more. Poor Maggie! Not hers the blame that she did not win safe across,

> "For Nannie, far before the rest,
> Hard upon noble Maggie prest,
> And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle;
> But little wist she Maggie's mettle!
> Ae spring brought off her master hale,
> But left behind her ain grey tail;
> The carlin claught her by the rump,
> And left poor Maggie scarce a stump."

It is a coincidence that Burns's three rivers, Ayr, Doon, and Nith, should all have an old bridge and a new, side by side. The Auld Brig of Doon consists of one massive arch, and is steep and narrow, as bridges were wont to be when it was built. For many a year it was the only bridge across the Doon from Kyle to Carrick, and often in the stormy days four centuries ago it rang with the tramp of desperate men, on their way to seek revenge or plunder. Here the leader would stay his men to see that all were in order, as young Kennedy of Bargany did on that bleak December day when he marched to his death on the bogside of Duneane. When the new bridge was built in 1813, the Road Trustees doomed the old one to destruction, and contracted for its removal. Fortunately, some loyal admirers of Burns learned the intention of the Trustees, and exerted themselves to prevent this act of vandalism. For the time it was saved, but, as no provision was made for the upkeep of the bridge, it threatened to fall to pieces from utter neglect.

Again its friends came to the rescue, and to such good effect, that, ever since, the old bridge has been as well-cared for as the new. The petition presented by Hamilton Paul on this occasion is worth recalling :—

"Unto the Honourable the Trustees of the Roads in the County of Ayr, the Petition and Complaint of the Auld Brig o' Doon :

'Must I, like modern fabrics of a day,
Decline unwept, the victim of decay ?
Shall my bold arch that proudly stretches o'er
Doon's classic stream, from Kyle's to Carrick's shore,
Be suffered in oblivion's gulf to fall,
And hurl to wreck my venerable wall ?
Forbid it ! every tutelary power
That guards my *keystane* at the midnight hour.
Forbid it, ye who, charmed by Burns's lay,
Amid these scenes can linger out the day !
Let Nannie's sark, and Maggie's mangled tail
Plead in my cause, and in that cause prevail.
The man of taste, who comes my form to see,
And curious asks—but asks in vain—for me,
With tears of sorrow will my fate deplore,
When he is told "The *Auld Brig* is no more."
Stop then, O stop, the more than vandal rage
That marks this revolutionary age ;
And bid the structure of your fathers last,
The pride of this, the boast of ages past ;
Nor ever let your children's children tell—
By your decree the ancient fabric fell.'

"May it therefore please your Honours to consider the petition, and grant such sum as you may think proper for repairing and keeping up the Old Bridge of Doon."

Close by the old bridge, on the north side of the river, stands what all Ayrshire people know as *The* Monument. It may be said that there

was no need for any monument of man's contrivance in a spot where every natural object is a memorial of the poet; but it must at least be allowed that the monument is worthy of its situation, and no higher praise than that could be bestowed. Upon a massive triangular base, with one face looking towards each of the three divisions of Ayrshire—Cunninghame, Kyle, and Carrick—there rests a circular peristyle consisting of nine Corinthian pillars, one for each of the Muses. The whole is surmounted by a cupola, crowned by a gilt tripod, supported by three inverted dolphins. The interior of the basement is occupied by a circular apartment, in which some memorials of the poet are preserved. Whether by accident or by design, the wedding-ring of Jean Armour, the Bible which Burns presented to Highland Mary, and a pair of drinking-glasses which he sent to Clarinda, lie side by side. How easy it would be to pronounce a homily on the juxtaposition of these three memorials! *Favete linguis!*

In a house within the beautiful grounds which surround the monument, Thom's masterpieces "Tam o' Shanter" and "Souter Johnnie" have found a home. The crowds that come every summer Saturday to spend an afternoon at the Monument never seem to tire of gazing at that matchless pair of "drouthy brithers." It is worth noting that James Thom, the sculptor of the figures, was born at Burn, in the parish of Stair, which adjoins Tarbolton. He learned the trade of a stone-cutter or mason, and occupied his leisure in attempts at sculpture. His figures of the cronies brought him fame. They were exhibited all over this country and in America,

Everywhere their lack of technique was forgotten in admiration and amusement, so infectious was their hilarity. Thom spent the last years of his life in America. He died in 1850.

The proposal to erect a monument to Burns in the neighbourhood of his birthplace originated with Alexander Boswell of Auchinleck (he had not then received his title), the son of Johnson's biographer, and a devoted admirer of the national poet. The account of the meeting which he called in Ayr to consider the scheme, is interesting. On the motion of the Rev. Hamilton Paul, Mr Boswell was called to the chair, and on the motion of the chairman Mr Paul was appointed secretary. It was proposed by the chairman, and seconded by the secretary, that it was desirable to take steps to erect a monument in Alloway in honour of the great Ayrshire poet. It was further proposed by the secretary, and seconded by the chairman, that Mr Boswell should act as convener, and Mr Paul as secretary, of a committee to be appointed to give effect to this resolution. These several motions having been carried, *nemine contradicente*, the meeting separated, after a vote of thanks to the chairman had been duly proposed by the secretary —the truth being that the two enthusiasts were the only persons present. They were not easily discouraged. An account of the meeting was published in the leading newspapers, and subscriptions poured in, till a sum of over three thousand pounds was in the hands of the treasurer. On January 25, 1820, Mr Boswell, as Depute-Grand Master for Ayrshire, laid the foundation stone of the edifice,

and delivered an eloquent address to the vast concourse of spectators who witnessed the ceremony.

"When we consider the place, let us remember that these very scenes which we now look upon awakened in his youthful breast that animating spark which burst upon the world in a blaze of inspiration. In yonder cottage he first drew breath. In that depository of the lowly dead sleeps the once humble, now immortal, model of the cottage life; there rests his pious father; and there it was his fond and anxious wish that his dust should have been mingled with the beloved and kindred ashes. Below us flows the Doon, the classic Doon, but made classic by his harmony; there, gliding through the woods, and leaving his 'banks and braes,' he rolls his clear and 'far-fetch'd waters' to the ocean. Before us stand the ruins of Kirk Alloway, shrouded in all the mystic imagery with which it is enveloped by his magic spells. . . . This monument rises like the piled cairn over our warriors of old—each man casts a stone. May the work prosper! and when happily completed, then may it tell to future generations, that the age which could produce a Burns was rich also in those who could appreciate his talents, and who, while they felt and owned the power of his muse, have honoured his name."

In 1844 there was a remarkable gathering here. Thousands upon thousands of people assembled from every part of Scotland to take part in a grand Burns Festival. The three sons of the poet were present; so was his youngest sister; and with them were several nephews and nieces

of Burns, as well as Jessie Lewars, who nursed him in his last illness, and to whom he dedicated that tenderest of all his love songs—"O wert thou in the cauld blast." Among those who took an active part in the proceedings were the Earl of Eglinton, Professor Wilson (Christopher North), Sir Archibald Alison, and a host of others of less fame. It is difficult to discover the immediate cause of this enormous gathering of people, whose enthusiasm the unpropitious weather could not damp. It was thus explained by Lord Eglinton, who described himself as "the descendant of those who dwelt in the 'Castle of Montgomerie,'" and who felt himself "only too highly honoured in being permitted to propose the memory of him who then wandered there unknown on the banks of Fail." "This is not a meeting," he said, "for the purpose of recreation and amusement; it is not a banquet, at which a certain number of toasts printed on paper are to be proposed and responded to, which to-day marks our preparations: it is the enthusiastic desire of a whole people to pay honour to their countryman; it is the spontaneous offering of a nation's feeling towards the illustrious dead, and, added to this, a desire to extend a hand of welcome and friendship to those whom he has left behind. Here—on the very spot where he first drew breath, on the very ground which his genius has hallowed, beside the Old Kirk of Alloway which his verse has immortalised, beneath the monument which an admiring and repentant people have raised to him—we meet, after the lapse of years, to pay our homage to the Man of Genius."

There is now a new church at Alloway, but the "Auld Kirk" claims our attention. Let us visit it again ere we leave this corner of the Burns Country.

The Kirk stands directly opposite the monument. Relic-hunters have carried off its roof, and there is little beauty in its ivy-grown walls. Above the "winnock-bunker" in the eastern gable there hangs the old church bell, though it has not summoned worshippers together for over a century and a half. The interior of the church has been used as a burying-ground since 1694. David Cathcart, who took his title of Lord Alloway from this parish, was buried there in 1829. In Burns's boyhood, the church was in ruins and the churchyard a neglected waste, and doubtless it seemed to him a fitting scene for some of the wild revels which Betty Davidson so vividly described. It was, however, his respect for his father's burial-place—the place where he hoped to be laid to rest himself—that led him to persuade Captain Grose to include Alloway Kirk in his *Antiquities*. Grose promised to do so, on condition that his "ingenious friend Mr Robert Burns" wrote down one of the weird tales which were connected with the ruin, and thus "Tam o' Shanter" came to be penned. Little did William Burnes think, when, with that reverent regard for God's acre which marked his creed, he petitioned the Magistrates of Ayr for permission to enclose the kirkyard, that the old kirk would owe its fame to a dance of witches within its walls. As little did he think that his own grave in that kirkyard would come to be a shrine, at which thousands of pilgrims

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would bend with reverent admiration to read his epitaph.

"O ye whose cheek the tear of pity stains,
Draw near with pious rev'rence, and attend!
Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,
The tender father, and the gen'rous friend.
The pitying heart that felt for human woe;
The dauntless heart that fear'd no human pride
The friend of man, to vice alone a foe;
For 'ev'n his failings lean'd to virtue's side.'"

CHAPTER IV

ALLOWAY AND MOUNT OLIPHANT

"There was a lad was born in Kyle,
But whatna day o' whatna style,
I doubt it 's hardly worth the while
To be sae nice wi' Robin."

A HUNDRED and fifty years ago the "banks and braes" of Doon bloomed as "fresh and fair" as they do to-day; long before that time, Roman legions fought their way through its valley; the graves of Alpin and his fierce warriors from Cantire lay in the deep glens which sheltered the Covenanters; memories of strange deeds, some brave, some base, clung round the walls of the castles by its banks; yet Doon was then unknown to fame. The fortress on Loch Doon is now a neglected ruin, overgrown with weeds, the haunt of hawk and heron; the very site of many an ancient keep has been forgotten; yet an "auld clay biggin" has become a shrine, to which pilgrims come in thousands year by year; an "auld kirk," which is scarcely even picturesque, is protected with jealous care; an "auld brig," no longer fit for traffic, is more famous than the greatest triumph of engineering skill; and

BURNS'S COTTAGE, ALLOWAY. *Page* 44.

"bonnie Doon" is known wherever men speak the English tongue. A peasant's child, born by the banks of Doon, has wrought this change.

"The land he trod
Hath now become a place of pilgrimage;
Where dearer are the daisies of the sod
That could his song engage.
The hoary hawthorn, wreathed
Above the bank on which his limbs he flung.
While some sweet plaint he breathed;
The streams he wandered near;
The maidens whom he loved; the songs he sung—
All, all are dear."

To the banks of this stream William Burnes came, in 1752, to be gardener to Mr Crawford of Doonside. He proved an excellent servant—sober and serious, devoted to his master's interests. Three years later, Dr William Fergusson retired from practice in London, and bought the small estate of Doonholm, on the opposite side of the river. There he built the main portion of the mansion that overlooks the Doon a short distance above the bridges, and he engaged William Burnes to lay out the grounds. The beautiful gardens and shaded walks that skirt the river, and the avenue of elms that line the approach to the house, bear witness to his taste.

William Burnes was a frugal man. Living alone in Doonside Mill, he had few wants, and his expenditure was small. He had something to spare for the old folks at home in Dunnottar, and he saved enough to be able to feu some seven acres of ground from Dr Campbell of Rozelle. He laid out this piece of ground as a market-garden, and on a corner of it he built, with his own hands, a humble clay cottage, a simple "but and ben,"

with byre and barn adjoining, all roofed with thatch. So it can be seen to-day; and, not stately Holyrood, not Scott's "romance of stone and lime," not any other palace, or cot, or castle in broad Scotland, is held in deeper reverence than this clay cottage by the Doon. Here, in 1757, William Burnes and Agnes Brown began their wedded life. It was a happy union between that heavy-browed, deep-thinking, solemn man from the shores of the North Sea and this merry-hearted, sweet-voiced, sunny, Carrick maid. Thirteen months later, Robert Burns was born.

The Burnses spent eight happy years in the cottage at Alloway. The father worked hard in the grounds of Doonholm during the day, and in his own garden in the evening; but always when night fell,

> "His wee bit ingle, blinkin bonnilie,
> His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty wifie's smile,
> The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
> Does a' his weary kiaugh and care beguile,
> And makes him quite forget his labour and his toil."

The cottage was a comfortable home, vastly superior to the majority of Scottish peasant homes a hundred and fifty years ago; but it became too small for the increasing Burnes household. There were now four children. The boys, Robert and Gilbert, had begun to attend school. The father hoped to see them grow up under his own eye, and that desire could be fulfilled in but one way. He must turn farmer. He spoke of his intention to Provost Fergusson, and that "generous master" not only offered him a lease of the farm of Mount Oliphant, but also agreed to advance a sum of money sufficient to stock the

farm. To Mount Oliphant, then, he removed in 1766.

William Burnes continued to own the cottage at Alloway until 1781, when he sold it to the Incorporation of Shoemakers in Ayr. For nearly a century thereafter it was a public-house, the most notable landlord of which was Miller Goudie, whose ignorance of Burns and love of whisky used to raise the ire of devout pilgrims. Keats did not spare him when he visited the cottage in 1818. "His gab hindered my sublimity," he said. "The flat dog made me write a flat sonnet." This is Keats's sonnet:—

"This mortal body of a thousand days
Now fills, O Burns, a space in thine own room,
Where thou didst dream alone on budded bays,
Happy and thoughtless of thy day of doom!
My pulse is warm with thine own Barley-bree,
My head is light with pledging a great soul,
My eyes are wandering, and I cannot see,
Fancy is dead and drunken at its goal;
Yet can I stamp my foot upon thy floor,
Yet can I ope thy window-sash to find
The meadow thou hast trampèd o'er and o'er,—
Yet can I think of thee till thought is blind,—
Yet can I gulp a bumper to thy name,—
O smile among the shades, for this is fame!"

From time to time additions were made to the building, but the trustees of the Burns Monument, who acquired the property in 1881, have wisely abolished them all, and have put the cottage into the state in which it was in 1759. In it and in an adjoining museum are preserved many relics of the poet—articles of furniture, valuable manuscripts, and engravings—which are full of interest. Visitors enter the cottage through

the barn, and pass through the byre and the "best room," into the kitchen, in a corner of which stands the bed in which the poet was born. How many of the world's best and noblest, as well as of its poorest and meanest, have here rendered homage to the peasant's son! Here, high and low, rich and poor, stand on a common plane, remembering his words:

> "The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
> The Man's the gowd for a' that."

Mount Oliphant lies about two miles from Alloway, on the rising ground to the east of the more inland of the two roads from Ayr to Maybole. As with all the farms occupied by the Burnses, father and son, the soil is of the poorest and the situation of the best. They had a fatal knack of making a poet's choice before Cunningham remarked it at Ellisland. The plain, one-storeyed building is probably that which sheltered the Burnes family; but the out-buildings are evidently modern. Facing the valley, there is a garden with a few fruit-trees, which may have been planted by William Burnes. The valley itself is a delightful picture of green fields, set amid thick woods that hide the river and the houses on its banks. Beyond it, the slopes of Newark and Brown Carrick Hills curve westwards towards the Heads of Ayr, between which and the spires of the town, the bold peaks of Arran show in the distance beyond the Firth. It has been asked why Burns, who gazed so often over this beautiful expanse, made no attempt to give expression to the deep imaginings it must have stirred within him. He mentions Ailsa Rock

MOUNT OLIPHANT.

but once in his poems, and then quite incidentally. Not once does he speak of Arran, lying out there like a giant asleep. Both Ailsa and Arran appear in Wordsworth's sonnets of 1833. Keats apostrophised Ailsa, "Thou craggy ocean-pyramid," when he made a pilgrimage to the land of Burns; though, truth to tell, his sonnet is unworthy of the poet who wrote of the "season of mists and mellow fruitfulness." Shall we say that Burns knew best the limitations of his own powers? Human himself "to the red-ripe of the heart," human beings and not inanimate nature, even in her grandest mood, inspired his muse. Or was it that the obvious was not for him? He would not write to order, either of nature or man. Very plainly did he tell Nicol so at Carron. "Look, Burns! Good heaven! look, look! What a glorious sight!" cried Nicol, as the blaze of the furnaces shone through the trees. "Sir, I would not look, look at your bidding, if it were the mouth of hell," the poet answered.

For some months Robert and Gilbert trudged daily across the fields to attend John Murdoch's school in Alloway; but that excellent master received an appointment elsewhere, and their father then became their sole preceptor. If ever man strove to do his duty by his children, that man was William Burnes. He read with them; he observed with them; he talked with them; he even wrote *A Manual of Religious Belief* for them: and all this in the midst of an unceasing struggle for bare life with the barren soil of an upland farm. Doubtless the seemingly hopeless fight with poverty, the knowledge that his strength was failing, and premature old age pressing upon

him while his children were still unable to "fend for themselves," made him irritable. Withal, he had a tender regard for his family. One likes to think of him sitting by his daughter's side in a storm, lest the lightning should scare her, as she herded in the fields. The "Saturday Night" presents a faithful picture of an evening at Mount Oliphant. In the thrifty, industrious mother who "gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new," Burns portrayed his own mother. Her cheerful nature did not succumb to the keen pressure of poverty. She had a woman's interest in Jenny's love-affair, a smile in her heart for the bashful, awkward sweetheart, and a simple pride in his praise of her homely fare. It was otherwise with the father. He was oppressed with anxiety about the future of his children. His "admonitions due," his earnest petition when

> "Kneeling down, to Heaven's Eternal King,
> The saint, the father, and the husband prays,"

are expressions of an anxious care, which finds definite utterance when

> "The youngling cottagers retire to rest:
> The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
> And proffer up to Heav'n the warm request,
> That He who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
> And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
> Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
> For them and for their little ones provide;
> But chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside."

Nearly a third of Robert Burns's life was spent at Mount Oliphant, and in as far as he was made the man he was, the process was performed there. The beginnings of his wisdom are to be sought in the wise counsels of his father; his

LOCH DOON CASTLE. *Page* 54.

love of Scottish song awoke as he listened to the sweet tones of his mother's voice; his perfect familiarity with "devils, ghosts, fairies, witches and warlocks," was due to Betty Davidson; and he owed his "critic craft" to his constant poring over a collection of songs, which was his *vade mecum*, as he drove his cart along these country lanes. There, "love and poetry began with him." Beside him in the harvest-field, Nelly Kilpatrick, daughter of the miller of Perclewan, gathered up the sheaves. She was a "bonnie, sweet, sonsy lass," and, though he was but fifteen, and she a year younger, his "pulse beat a furious rantann," as he picked the thistles out of her hand. In her praise he sang his first song:

> "O, once I lov'd a bonnie lass,
> Ay, and I love her still."

In the lending library at Ayr he found solid books, such as Derham's *Physico- and Astro-Theology*, and Ray's *Wisdom of God in the Creation*, to improve his mind. From his friend and schoolmaster, Murdoch, and from Mrs Paterson, widow of his father's friend, he borrowed lighter literature—poetry and romance—which served to break that "cheerless gloom of the hermit" in which he was so often plunged. For three weeks he lived with Murdoch in Ayr, and in that short time, by dint of study day and night, he mastered the difficulties of English grammar, and acquired a smattering of French. Murdoch seems to have been a good friend to young Burns. "He was," says Gilbert, "a principal means of my brother's improvement." Perhaps the recollection of his excellence may account

for what some one noted as "the singular partiality Burns had for schoolmasters." Murdoch was a native of Ayr. After acquiring experience as a teacher in various parts of the country, he was in 1772 appointed English Master in the burgh school of his native town. Unfortunately he retained this position for only four years. Having spoken too plainly and too unguardedly of Dr Dalrymple, he was dismissed. Henceforth he had to seek a precarious livelihood in London, where he died, none too well off, in 1824.

There is something more to be considered in Burns's life at Mount Oliphant. Life on this sterile farm was hard. "The unceasing toil of a galley slave" was no exaggeration. Too soon his boyish frame had to bear the weight of a man's work. His shoulders were bent with holding the heavy four-horse plough, which turned over a furrow fifteen to twenty inches broad.

"Aft thee and I, in aught hours gaun,
On guid March weather,
Hae turned sax rood beside our han'
For days thegither."

Harvest entailed the severest strain. From dawn to dark, with but two short intervals for food, the reaper strode along the rigs plying his "teething hook" till the back ached and the head swam, and his spirit was well-nigh broken. Winter brought no rest from toil. This is his own picture of it:

"The thresher's weary, flingin-tree
The lee-lang day had tirèd me;
And when the day had closed his e'e,
Far i' the west,
Ben i' the spence, richt pensivelie,
I gaed to rest."

What a life for any indifferently-fed lad of fifteen! How hard must it have been to Robert Burns, with his proud spirit, conscious of latent powers, for ever chafing at his lot! The physical effects remained with Burns all through life; they hastened his death. The moral effect—the loss of a steadfast aim, the stifling of ambition, the desire to seek pleasure while it might be found—was no less disastrous. To understand Burns's life, to account for the weakness that marred his strength, one must follow him closely through the toilworn years of his boyhood at Mount Oliphant. In this stern school he learned the unheroic philosophy which he thus set forth:

"Then, sore harass'd, and tir'd at last, with Fortune's vain delusion,
I dropt my schemes, like idle dreams, and came to this conclusion:
The past was bad, and the future hid—its good or ill untrièd;
But the present hour was in my power, and so I would enjoy it.
Thus, all obscure, unknown, and poor, thro' life I'm doomed to wander,
Till down my weary bones I lay in everlasting slumber;
No view nor care, but shun whate'er might breed me pain or sorrow;
I live to-day as well's I may, regardless of to-morrow."

What hope there was of the dawn of brighter days at Mount Oliphant was dispelled when Provost Fergusson died, and his affairs came to be administered by an unsympathetic "factor," whose "threateningly insolent epistles" used to set the family in tears.

"He'll stamp and threaten, curse and swear,
He'll apprehend them, poind their gear,
While they maun staun', wi' aspect humble,
An' hear it a', and fear and tremble."

The family had grown to seven, the father's infirmities were increasing; and to make ends meet, expenses had to be retrenched, their mode of living had to become even meaner than it was, and the burden of toil had to fall still heavier on the growing boys. For two years more they bore it, and then a break in the lease of the farm gave them welcome relief. Gladly they exchanged Mount Oliphant for what promised to be a more endurable life at Lochlea.

CHAPTER V

THE CASTLES BY THE DOON

"Amang the bonnie, winding banks,
Where Doon rins, wimplin, clear;
Where Bruce ance rul'd the martial ranks,
An' shook his Carrick spear."

Carrick is a kingdom of castles. Along the seashore, in the valleys of Doon and Girvan, everywhere they are to be found, ruined or renovated, each with a story of romantic interest, and all recalling the time when in the most literal sense every man's house was his castle. On some old stone coffin-lids which were found in the Church of St John's at Ayr, a sword appeared as the sign of a man, for men of Kyle and Carrick have been fighting men since there were men to fight. The Roman road from Kirkcudbright to Ayr passed down the valley of the Doon, and here and there along that valley there are records of the stern resistance offered to the advance of the conquerors. Roman and British burying-places, broken weapons, pieces of armour, and other signs of conflict, have been found. Early historians describe a great battle at the "Water of Dun" in Carrick, in which Maximus and the Romans defeated Eugenius, King of Scots. Most of the Scottish leaders were slain, and were buried on the field. Stone coffins and cairns, and the remains of

British forts, found on the banks of Doon near the village of Dalrymple, suggest a site for this almost forgotten battle.

The oldest and the strongest of the ruined castles by the Doon is that on an island near the head of Loch Doon. Considerable portions of its thick walls and the square tower are left, and from the shore the castle appears comparatively complete. Inside the walls, however, is a weed-grown mass of fallen masonry that speaks of utter neglect. After the disastrous Battle of Methven, Sir Christopher de Seton, brother-in-law of Bruce, sought shelter in Loch Doon Castle. He was one of Bruce's most devoted friends; he was present at the slaying of Comyn in Dumfries, and he saved the life of the king at the defeat of Methven. He was, therefore, a marked man. The English followed him to his retreat on Loch Doon; and though from the strength and situation of the castle it might have been expected to be able to defy any force that could be brought into that remote region, by some means or other it was taken. Seton was captured, and shortly afterwards he was hanged at Dumfries. There is a persistent tradition that he was betrayed by Gilbert de Carrick, governor of the castle, or by one of his underlings. Indeed, Barbour names the traitor:

> "And worthy Crystoll off Setoun
> Into Loudon * betresyt was,
> Throw a discipill off Judas,
> Maknab, a false tratour, that ay
> Was off his duelling, nycht and day."

* Loch Doon is undoubtedly meant. Some MSS. have London, but Seton was not in London.

A part of the farm of Beoch, near the lower end of the loch, called Macnabston, was said to have been the reward of the traitor. Doon Castle was one of the few strongholds which held out for David Bruce when Scotland was overrun by the English after the Battle of Halidon Hill. It was burned down sometime in the sixteenth century, and for long thereafter was utilised as a quarry whenever a farm-steading was built on the shores of Loch Doon.

The lands about Loch Doon are bleak and bare, but the hills grouped round its southern extremity have a rough beauty and a gloomy grandeur of their own. The river issues from the northern end of the loch, and for nearly a mile its course is through a remarkably wild and picturesque glen. Perpendicular cliffs, sometimes scarcely thirty feet apart, rise to a height of two or three hundred feet on either bank. A footpath has been cut out in the cliff by the edge of the stream, and much has been done to make Ness Glen one of the most beautiful of wild spots in the south of Scotland. In the opening poem of the little volume which he issued in 1826, Robert Hetrick, the blacksmith-poet of Dalmellington, thus describes the glen:

"Doon issuing from her slumbering bed of rest,
Is downwards through the rocky tunnel prest,
Then dash'd against yon shelvy, pointed rock,
Which, unmolested, stands the furious shock,
And turns the torrent to the other side,
Which, in its turn, resists the furious tide;
Here dashing on the precipices steep;
There boiling in the dreadful caverns deep;
Now madly raging o'er the ragged linn,
Mocking the voice of thunder with its din;

Bathing the margins with the foamy spray ;
And thus the tortured waters pass away,
Leaving the caverns, linns, and rocks behind,
For banks and channels of a gentler kind,
Where woods and lawns alternate please the eye ;
With bowers and cottages and streamlets nigh—
Where music swells in ilka leafy grove,
In all the charms of harmony and love ;
And fair Barbeth stands clad in summer green,
Adds lustre to the wild, romantic scene."

Hetrick is a fair example of the village poet whom Burns's success induced to appear before the public. His verses on the events of the French war, though they show no sign of inspiration, won him some local fame. None of his poems rises above mediocrity ; but he was an unassuming man, with an honest admiration for Burns, to whose memory he addressed several pieces ; and he had a genuine love for his native Doon, which sometimes finds expression in pleasing, descriptive touches.

It will be remembered that M'Adam of Craigengillan sent Burns "an obliging letter in the commencement of his poet's career," a letter of which Burns was very proud :

"'See wha taks notice o' the bard' I
I lap and cry'd fu' loud."

Craigengillan is a small estate in a wild and remote situation on the Water of Ken, in the county of Kirkcudbright, but Burns's friend acquired extensive lands about the foot of Loch Doon, and effected many improvements upon them. He brought a "dyker" from the North to instruct the people in the building of stone

CASSILLIS HOUSE. *Page* 63.

fences, an affair to which Burns alludes in the verse :

> " An' when those legs to guid, warm kail
> Wi' welcome canna bear me,
> A lee dykeside, a sybow tail,
> An' barley scone shall cheer me."

There is an interesting tradition, which might lead to a romance, that about the time of Malcolm Canmore, three sisters came to the valley of the Doon, and that they built three castles which stood within sight of one another, at Dalmellington, Keirs, and Laicht. Whether the first sister, Dame Helen, gave her name to the village (Dame Helen's town) at the foot of the castle mound or not, it is impossible to tell. The " Castle Crofts," the " Lady's Well," and the fine Moot-hill which overlooks the village, preserve the tradition that a castle did stand there. Dalmellington claims to have been founded by the Romans, and, though but a village, it has all the importance of a burgh of barony. Near it is the house of Camlarg, the birthplace of Burns's friend, Major Logan of Park, " thairm-inspirin', rattlin' Willie." The major had some poetical instincts, and was an accomplished fiddler. As became a namesake and relation of the great Laird of Logan, he had a ready wit, which did not desert him in his last painful illness. Mr Cuthill, minister of Ayr, calling to see him, said it would require fortitude to bear up under such sufferings. " Aye," said the dying major, " it would take *fiftitude*."

In the days of the persecution, nine hundred Highlandmen were quartered in Dalmellington to oppress the covenanting people. From the

diary of one Quintin Dick, Wodrow quotes at length to prove that fines and imprisonment were imposed for attendance at sermons, that families were dispersed, and houses plundered. Dick himself was imprisoned in Dunnottar Castle, and sentenced to be banished; but he contrived to escape. The story goes that in the glen of Dunaskin a party of Covenanters had taken shelter. There was a legend that a great treasure had been concealed in this glen, and committed to the care of Satan. The Highlanders heard the tale, and, fearing neither devil nor man, set out to hunt for the treasure. The fugitives in the glen thought they had been betrayed when they saw the soldiers marching up the slopes. Escape was impossible. Suddenly a thick mist came on, and balls of fire rushed down the steep sides of the glen. The Highlanders fell into a panic. They doubted not that the foul fiend himself was present to protect his treasure, and they fled.

The old castle of Laicht stood in this same glen of Dunaskin, at a point where the burn bends sharply round, so that the steep slopes afford protection on three sides. The name is said to have been derived thus. More than a thousand years ago Alpin, King of Scots, led a party of wild caterans from Cantire to the shores of Carrick. They marched along the Roman road through the Doon valley, burning, pillaging, and slaying, as they were accustomed to do. The men of Alcluyd followed them, and cut off their retreat to the sea. Alpin chose a powerful position, with hills on either flank and the deep glen of Dunaskin in front. The men of Ayr-

shire marched round the head of the glen, and came down on Alpin's side. It was a dangerous venture. They must either break through the line of Alpin's men in front, or be driven into the deep ravine behind. So fierce was the conflict that the place is still called Dun-ascoin, the hill of combat. The Lowlanders were successful at all points; the men of Cantire were scattered in hopeless confusion, and Alpin was slain. The victors buried him where he fell, and gave the spot the name it bears to-day—Laicht-Alpin—the grave of Alpin.

The course of the Doon, past ironworks and mining villages, is uninteresting until it reaches Boreland Glen, where the river cuts its way through a barrier of red sandstone. The low hills to the right are the Craigs of Kyle, through which Jeanie Glover came "o'er the moor amang the heather." The foot of Boreland Glen was the scene of a typical encounter between the Kennedys and the Craufurds. Time was hanging heavy on the hands of the Kennedys. They were spoiling for a fight. Their hereditary foes, the Craufurds, lived across the Doon, and, though there was no immediate cause of quarrel, the Kennedys had little difficulty in making one. They tethered a sow on the lands of the Craufurds, and sent a polite message to the Laird of Kerse that he could not "flit" her. Sir Alexander Boswell of Auchinleck, himself descended from the Craufurds of Kerse, has told the tale in a serio-comic poem, which he called "Skeldon Haughs; or, The Flitting of the Sow." The old Laird of Kerse was too frail to take the field himself, but he sent his sons and his men to

drive the Kennedys and the sow across the Doon. This they did. Five score Kennedys are said to have been drowned in a pool called "Kennedy's Dub." The old laird waited anxiously at home for news of the battle:

"Watchin' some messenger of speed,
Tidings to bear in time of need:
Whan lightsome Will o' Ashyntree
Cam breathless pechin' oure the lea.
Lang, lang or he cou'd parley hear,
The auld man cried, fu' loud and clear,
'Is the sow flitted? tell me, loon,
Is auld Kyle up and Carrick down?'
Mingl'd wi' sobs, his broken tale
The youth began—'Ah! Kerse, bewail
This luckless day—Your blithe son John
Now, wae's my heart, lies on the loan;
And he could sing like ony merle'—
'Is the sow flitted?' cried the carle,
'Gie me my answer, short and plain,
Is the sow flitted? yammerin' wean.'
'The sow, deil tak' her, 's oure the water,
And at their back the Craufurds batter;
The Carrick cowts are cow'd and bitted'—
'My thumb for Jock! The sow is flitted.'"

There is nothing left now of the old castle of Kerse, and there is a new house of Skeldon, where Craufurds used to live. One of the Skeldon Craufurds was a leader on the Parliamentary side at the Battle of Marston Moor, and claimed a considerable share of the honour of the victory. According to his own statement, as recorded by Lord Hollis, it was he and not Cromwell who led the brigade of horse which turned the fortunes of the day. Hollis of course was a bitter enemy of Cromwell, and ready to accept any statement which promised to damage

the reputation of him who was generally termed the hero of Marston Moor.

There was at one time a castle of Dalrymple, the original home of the Stair family. The Dalrymples were not strong enough to hold their own with their powerful neighbours the Kennedys, and in the fourteenth century the barony of Dalrymple fell into the hands of Kennedy of Dunure, and the castle was razed to the ground. The village of Dalrymple has grown up about the church during the course of last century. Its name is said to mean "the dale of the crooked pool," and this exactly describes its situation at a bend of the river. In Burns's time the parish school was not in the village, but at St Valley, not far from the site of the present schoolhouse. Burns attended this school for a summer quarter. He and Gilbert were equally deficient in penmanship, but both could not be spared from the work of the farm. They were therefore sent to school week about. Burns had several friends at the little hamlet of Perclewan, about a mile and a half from Dalrymple. There he used to come to get his horses shod by Henry M'Candlish, the man who lent him *The Life of Wallace*, the reading of which aroused his patriotism. The blacksmith's son, James, was an intimate friend of the poet, and one of his correspondents in after years. James married the "witty" Miss Smith, one of the "Mauchline Belles"; Dr Robert Smith Candlish, the celebrated leader of the Free Church, and Principal of the Free Church College, was their son. While he waited on the shoeing of his horses, Burns no doubt looked in to see Allan Kilpatrick, the miller, especially

when there was a chance to have a word with the miller's daughter, Nelly, the "sweet, sonsy lass" who charmed him on the harvest field at Mount Oliphant. The little stream that flows from Martnaham Loch still drives a mill at Perclewan, but the hamlet has entirely disappeared, and all that is left of M'Candlish's smithy is an outhouse that forms part of the little farmstead.

South of Dalrymple, the valley is bounded by the fairy-haunted Cassillis Downans. These beautiful green hills, the highest of which is not more than five hundred feet above the river, were favourite abodes of "the good folk." Indeed, they claimed these hills as their exclusive property, and would have no neighbours. Old people used to tell how the Lord of Cassillis tried in vain to build his house on the top of one of the hills, and gave up in despair when he found that, night by night, the fairies demolished whatever was built during the day. The hills are celebrated in "Halloween":

> "Upon that night, when fairies light,
> On Cassilis Downans dance,
> Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze,
> On sprightly coursers prance."

The summit of the highest of the Downans commands a wide and varied prospect. The valleys of Ayr, Doon, and Girvan are all in view, their fertile fields and wooded slopes contrasting with the bareness of the hills beyond Dalmellington and Straiton. The turrets of Cassillis House appear among the trees by which it is surrounded; the house is set in such a charming spot, that one is forced to ask if it might

not be the good taste rather than the exclusiveness of the fairies which led them to prevent its being built on the hilltop. Close by the old tower, which is incorporated in the modern house, the Dule Tree of Cassillis still flourishes. It may not be the identical tree under which the retainers of Cassillis assembled to mourn their lord who was slain on Flodden field, or from the limbs of which Johnie Faa was hanged; but if not, it is a worthy successor to some more ancient Dule Tree. Cassillis is famous as the scene of the best of the ballads of Ayrshire.

"The gypsies cam' to our gude lord's yett,
And O but they sang sweetly;
They sang sae sweet and sae very complete,
That doun cam' our fair lady.
And she cam' tripping doun the stair,
And all her maids before her,
As sune as they saw her weel-fa'ured face,
They cuist the glamourye o'er her.
'O come with me,' says Johnie Faa,
'O come with me, my dearie;
For I vow and I swear by the hilt of my sword,
That your lord shall nae mair come near ye.'

. . . . . .

'Gae tak' from me this gay mantil,
And bring to me a plaidie;
For if kith and kin and a' had sworn,
I'll follow my gypsy laddie.'

. . . . . .

And when our lord cam' hame at e'en,
And speired for his fair lady,
The tane she cried, and the tither replied,
'She 's awa' with the gypsy laddie.'"

There is the usual circumstantial account of the origin of the ballad. John, sixth Earl of Cassillis, a stern Covenanter, married Lady Jean Hamilton, daughter of the Earl of Haddington,

a young lady already secretly betrothed to Sir John Faa, a gallant knight of Dunbar. In the absence of the lady's husband, her lover came to Cassillis disguised as a gypsy, and persuaded her to elope with him. The "Gypsies' Steps" by which they forded the Doon can still be seen. Unfortunately for the fugitives, the earl returned sooner than he was expected. He immediately set out in pursuit of the lovers, and captured them with little difficulty. Sir John Faa and his gypsy companions were duly hanged from the branches of the Dule Tree, and the lady was confined for the rest of her life in a small apartment of Maybole Castle, the quaint oriel window of which still looks up the High Street. There is ample proof that this account is pure fiction. John, sixth Earl of Cassillis, was devoted to his wife until her death in 1642. There may have been an erring countess of an earlier date.

The giant plane known as the Dule Tree of Cassillis still stands beside the castle walls, but the no-less-famous Dule Tree of Auchendrane has disappeared. It was a magnificent ash, fifteen feet in circumference, with five great spreading limbs, so beautifully proportioned that it was the pride of the countryside. It is of this tree that Sir Walter Scott told a well-known story. "The last representative of the House of Auchendrane had the misfortune to be arrested for payment of a small debt; and, unable to discharge it, was preparing to accompany the messenger to the jail of Ayr. The servant of the law had compassion for his prisoner, and offered to accept of this remarkable tree as of value adequate to the discharge of the debt. 'What,' said the debtor,

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'sell the dule tree of Auchendrane! I will sooner die in the worst dungeon of your prison.'" Alas! the famous tree was eventually sold to a Maybole cabinetmaker, who made chests of drawers of it. Whether the Dule Tree was merely a gallows tree, or a meeting-place for mourners in some great calamity, it was a necessary adjunct of every ancient Carrick keep, and was held to be in some mysterious way bound up with the fortunes of the house.

The Doon is at its best and bonniest as it sweeps through the beautiful grounds and past the walls of the two houses of Auchendrane. The lower house was the home of David Cathcart, a member of a noted family of Ayr burgesses. Cathcart became one of the Lords of the High Court of Justiciary, and assumed the title of Lord Alloway. His grave is in the "auld haunted kirk" by the Doon. The "Union pines," planted by John Mure, first member of Parliament for Ayr burghs, to commemorate the union of the Parliaments in 1707, are now the glory of the woods in which the house is embowered.

The old house of Auchendrane has given place to a modern, grander, more commodious mansion. On an island within its policies there is a little heather-house, furnished to represent the scene in which

> "The landlady and Tam grew gracious,
> Wi' favours, secret, sweet, and precious:
> The Souter tauld his queerest stories;
> The landlord's laugh was ready chorus":

the four figures being the work of Thom, the self-taught sculptor. There are well-cared-for

gardens, terraced lawns above the river, and shaded walks through waving woods; but one almost forgets to notice these things here. One looks across three centuries and sees a rough, square keep, with a few small windows piercing its thick walls, a mighty ash shaking its huge limbs above some wretched out-buildings, and all around a dense, dark forest, broken only where a path is cut to reach the Doon. That was the home of the chief actors in the tragedy of Auchendrane. Scott has dramatised the story, which was first told in the criminal records. Mr Crockett found in it material for his *Grey Man*, as did Mr Robertson for his *Kings of Carrick*.

Here are the plain, blunt facts. In the end of the sixteenth century the house of Kennedy was divided into two rival factions. The Earl of Cassillis headed one, Gilbert Kennedy of Bargany, the other. Bargany and his supporters made several attempts on the earl's life. Cassillis waited his opportunity to root the branch of Bargany out of the ground. It came in 1601. Bargany had gone to Ayr, and, to reach his home, had to pass Maybole, where Cassillis was on the watch for him. Spies kept each party informed of the doings of the other. Bargany's friends, prominent among whom was Mure of Auchendrane, tried in vain to persuade him to delay his return. He was a headstrong youth of five-and-twenty, who claimed the right to go home when and how he chose. If the earl kept within his castle of Maybole, he would pass in peace; if the earl tried to bar his passage, he would fight his

way home though he fought alone. On a stormy day in December he set out with a party of eighty horsemen. They rode through blinding snow across the old bridge of Doon, and along the highway until they came near Maybole. There Cassillis awaited them with some two hundred men. Bargany tried to avoid an encounter by marching westward, but at the bog of Duneane he was intercepted. In the combat which ensued, Bargany received a mortal wound. Mure also was wounded, and several of his friends were killed. Bargany was buried in the church of St John's at Ayr, but on the death of his wife in 1605, their remains were removed together to a splendid tomb in Ballantrae. The funeral procession from Ayr to Ballantrae was an imposing spectacle. Over a thousand gentlemen on horseback rode behind a "Banner of Revenge," on which was painted a picture of the wounded Bargany, his son sitting at his knees, and "this deattone writtine betuix his handis, 'Judge and rewendge my caus, O Lord.'"

A liberal bribe to the King's Treasurer secured Cassillis from the consequences of the affair, but Bargany's friends determined to avenge his death. Believing that Sir Thomas Kennedy of Culzean had been the main instrument in obtaining the earl's "freedom," they began with him. Culzean was ostensibly the friend of Mure, and trusted him so far that he asked Mure to meet him near Ayr as he passed on his way to Edinburgh. Mure received the message, but bribed the bearer, a student named Dalrymple, to tell Culzean that he had been unable to deliver his message, since Mure was

from home. Meantime Auchendrane informed Bargany's brother and others of his faction of the projected journey of Culzean. They lay in wait for him near the church of St Leonard's, and slew him. Though Mure was not present at the murder of Culzean, he was strongly suspected of having instigated it. The only witness against him was the lad Dalrymple, whom he sought to put out of the way. Eventually Mure and his son killed Dalrymple on the seashore near Girvan. For this crime they were tried, and, on the evidence of one of their own retainers, convicted. Both were executed.

Founding on these facts, Scott and Mr Crockett have followed Pitcairn in portraying Mure as a fiend in human shape. He is accused of having fomented strife between Cassillis and Bargany, in order that he might profit by the downfall of one or other, or of both. His treachery to Culzean, and his murder of poor Dalrymple, are made to appear examples of many similar atrocities of which he was guilty. There is, of course, another side to the question. Mure was Bargany's brother-in-law, and was in all likelihood perfectly loyal to him. He was loyal enough, at any rate, to suffer wounds on his behalf. The murder of Culzean was justified according to the moral code which governed the feud. Dalrymple's death was due to his attempt to profit by the hold he had over Mure, and was not resorted to until he had returned, first from Arran and then from the Continent, to extort blackmail. Doubtless he was guilty of crimes sufficiently hideous, yet there is something

pathetic in the story of this man of eighty, who had given and received many a hard blow in the course of his long life, brought to the gallows at last, his house attainted, his faction broken, and his enemies exultant.

Maybole proudly styles itself the capital of Carrick. In the days when a journey to Edinburgh was not an affair to be lightly undertaken, the notables of Carrick had their town houses in Maybole. There they had many a merry gathering, and many a wild carousal during the long winter nights, and if, occasionally, heads were broken and lungs were pierced, that was only to be expected when eight-and-twenty families of fighting Kennedys and their kith were gathered together in one small town. Maybole is now a town of busy shoemakers, whose boots are to be found in every corner of the earth; but it does not forget that it has ancient and honourable traditions. Its history began in 1193, when Duncan, Earl of Carrick, endowed a church at Meybothel. Its central situation between the valleys of Doon and Girvan made it the natural capital of the land of the Kennedys, and by 1516 it was important enough to become a chartered burgh. In 1686 William Abercrummie, a minister of Maybole, who wrote a description of Carrick, lamented that many of the houses of the gentry were decayed and ruined, though the principal street was still "beautiful with the situation of two castles, one at each end of the street." One of these castles, that of the Kennedys of Blairquhan, after having served as a Tolbooth for over two hundred years, has given place to the New

Town Buildings towards the west end of the High Street. The other remains to catch the eye of the traveller as he enters the town from Ayr. This was the town house of the family of Dunure, the heads of which became earls of Cassillis and marquises of Ailsa. In an upper room of this castle, the countess of the ballad is said to have been immured. There she spent her time weaving on tear-stained tapestry the story of her short experience of stolen love.

The most interesting building in Maybole is what is called "The Auld College." This picturesque ruin is all that is left of the Collegiate Church which Sir John Kennedy of Dunure founded in 1371, that its provost and three prebendaries might celebrate divine service daily "for the happy state of himself, Mary his wife, and their children." Several branches of the Kennedy family have their burying-ground within the precincts of the "Auld College"; the lairds of Culzean and the earls of Cassillis, the old "kings of Carrick," all sleep together in this place, where prayers were wont to be made for the souls of their ancestors.

The house of the provost of the Collegiate Church stood in the Back Vennel, a steep and narrow street, which led from the church to the High Street. In this house, which can still be identified, although its appearance has been considerably changed and the street in which it stands has a new name, the famous debate between John Knox and Abbot Quintin Kennedy of Crossraguel was held. The ruins of Crossraguel stand about two miles south of Maybole, on the highway to Kirkoswald. The

abbey was founded in 1244, by Duncan, Earl of Carrick, who, being a grandson of a Lord of Galloway, was better acquainted with strong keeps than stately abbeys. The character of its founder and of the age in which he lived, can be read in the building. It has been described as a "half-baronial, half-ecclesiastical ruin, in which the rough, square tower, such as those from which moss-troopers issued to their forays, frowns over the beautiful remains of some rich and airy specimens of the middle period of Gothic work." Crossraguel cannot boast either the beauty of architecture or the wealth of associations of its more famous sisters in the eastern counties; but it suffered less than most abbeys at the hands of the Reformers, and is well worthy of a visit. The church is a long, narrow building, with a high wall dividing nave from choir.

The only tombstone of note is that of "Egidia Blair, Domina de Row, quae obiit Anno Domini MDXXX." The Lady Row dwelt in Baltersan Castle, the ruins of which can be seen from the abbey, and her will is still in existence, directing, among other things, that part of her estate should be devoted to the building of a bridge across the Girvan. The chapter-house is the most important of the buildings entered from the cloister. Its vaulted roof is supported by a central pillar, and the abbot's chair and the stone seats of the monks are still in their places. The buildings are wonderfully complete. The abbot's house could be made habitable with little difficulty; the conical dove-cot is almost entire; and enough is left of the farm-buildings, of the refectory, and of other parts of the structure, to give one an

excellent idea of the domestic arrangements of the monastic life.

Quintin Kennedy was Abbot of Crossraguel at the time of the Reformation. It was not safe to try to knock the house of a Kennedy about his ears, were he abbot or were he earl; and long after other monasteries had been dismantled, Abbot Quintin and his monks went about their duties and celebrated mass just as they had been accustomed to do. To fight with sword and spear was denied the abbot, but he fought stoutly for his faith with pen and voice. First he challenged John Willock of Ayr to meet him in debate; but Willock and he could not come to terms as to place and manner, and they did not meet. In 1561 Kennedy published a work in defence of the mass, and in the following year he proclaimed from the pulpit of Kirkoswald that he was prepared to debate the question with any leader of the Reformers. John Knox, who happened to be in Ayrshire at the time, appeared at Kirkoswald on the Sunday to accept the challenge; but the abbot discreetly stayed at home, and Knox occupied his pulpit. In the end it was arranged that they should meet in the provost's house at Maybole. There, before some eighty people, who managed to squeeze themselves into the small house which now is known as John Knox's house, for three days they thrashed out the question of the scriptural authority for the mass. Needless to say, the long-drawn-out debate led to no definite issue: both sides claimed the victory. Knox published an account of the whole affair, and in 1812 Boswell of Auchinleck printed a facsimile of it from the only copy known.

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Maybole is not without its records of the Covenanters. One of the great conventicles was held in 1677 at Craigdow, some distance to the south of the town, when John Welsh of Irongray and other ministers celebrated holy communion on the hillside in the presence of nearly eight thousand people, of whom six hundred were armed men. North-east of the town there is a farm, called Cargillstone, in commemoration of another great conventicle, at which Donald Cargill officiated two months before he met a martyr's death at Edinburgh. The boulder from which Cargill preached remained as a memorial of the event till the first Free Church was built in Maybole, when a portion of Cargill's stone was inserted in the front wall of the church. The last fragments of it are now to be found in a monument which has been erected in a corner of the field in honour of six Maybole men who fought at Bothwell Bridge, and were among the prisoners drowned off the Orkney Islands on their way to banishment. The virtues of another Covenanter, one John M'Lymont, in Auchalton, are celebrated in verse on an old-fashioned "through-stane" in the churchyard of Maybole.

In this churchyard the graves of two of Burns's friends are to be found. Near the churchyard gate lies David Dunn, the parish schoolmaster, to whom Burns sent his "most respectful remembrances," after a jolly meeting they had together in Maybole in 1786. Willie Niven, his Kirkoswald schoolfellow, is buried on the site of the old church. Burns often accompanied Niven to Maybole while they were at Kirkoswald. The young initiate into the sweet ways

of love probably remembered that here William Burnes and Agnes Brown first met, and here were wed. Niven lived to a ripe old age, and became the great man of his day in Maybole. Eventually his thrift increased to miserliness. He bought an estate in the adjoining parish of Kirkmichael; but the satisfaction it yielded him seems to have been limited to what he derived from gazing at it through a telescope from a window which he had specially built in his garden wall. His parsimonious ways made him intensely unpopular; and when he died, in 1844, it was, as an Irish wit expressed it, "wid the consint of the whole town."

CHAPTER VI

GIRVAN'S FAIRY-HAUNTED STREAM

"Now bank an' brae are claith'd in green,
An' scatter'd cowslips sweetly spring;
By Girvan's fairy-haunted stream,
The birdies flit on wanton wing."

GALL.

FEW rivers of the same length present more varied charms than the Girvan. It rises in a little loch, called Girvan-eye, 1500 feet above the sea, on the very borders of Galloway. At first its course is through a succession of lochs—Cornish, Skelloch, Lure, and Braddan—lying in a dreary moorland, the scene of a tribal battle fought before history began to be written. All the while it is rapidly descending, earning its name, which means *rough river*, as it tumbles over the rocks until it reaches Tairlaw, close to the Straiton road, where it dashes over cliff after cliff, and rages through a narrow gorge half a mile in length. Lower down it becomes the poet's "fairy-haunted stream." Between banks fringed with trees, of which some—the chestnuts and the "Bell Tree" at Cloncaird, the limes at Kirkmichael, the beeches at Kilkerran, and the

oaks and firs of Bargany—are magnificent, it flows past peaceful, old-world villages, and castles with memories of sturt and strife, until it reaches the sea at Girvan. Though it lies outside the Burns country, the town of Girvan is memorable to Burns students if only because in it Hately Waddell, poet, preacher, and Burns editor, began his ministerial career. Waddell was known for little more than the fluency of his utterance and the independence of his judgment, until he proposed "The Memory of Burns" at the centenary celebration at Alloway in 1859. His speech on that occasion made him famous. Waddell used to point, with pride and amusement, to a pound note that hung framed on his study wall. At the close of his oration an enthusiastic Burnsite had pressed it into his hands, saying, "God bless you, sir! Keep you that! You'll never know me nor my name; but you'll know that I love you."

The Girvan valley is rich in Covenanting memories. A detachment of troops was stationed at Blairquhan in the persecution time, and every kirkyard by the river has its records of their deeds. Beside the quaint *two-fashioned* Church of Straiton, under the shadow of Craigengower (hill of the goats), is the grave of Thomas M'Haffie, who was taken from his cave in the little glen by the farm of Linfairn, and shot for refusing to take the oath abjuring the Covenants. The Dyrock burn flows past the quiet churchyard of Kirkmichael, in which there is a monument to Gilbert M'Adam, a zealous Covenanter, who was shot by a company of militia as he attempted to escape from a prayer-meeting which they had surprised. In the side of the monu-

ment to his memory, the original headstone with Old Mortality's inscription is inserted. The village of Old Dailly has now disappeared, but the ruined church and the churchyard are still left among the trees. It is the burying-place of the Lairds of Bargany and Killochan. The daughters of that Earl of Winton who was attainted for the part he took in the Rebellion of 1715, sleep close by the church; William Bell Scott, poet and painter, is buried in the Penkill ground; but the Rev. Roderick Lawson, the genial recorder of Carrick traditions, expressed the common feeling when he wrote:

"There are gentle folks lie in Old Dailly Kirkyard,
Before whom the peasants did bow;
And learnèd men lie in Old Dailly Kirkyard,
Though their learning's of little worth now;
But the brave ones who died for our Freedom and Faith
Are the men whom this day we regard,
And we cherish their names as we stand round their graves,
In the hush of Old Dailly Churchyard."

Old Dailly has several Covenanters' graves. There are three original tombstones, one of which is said to have been the hearthstone of a man who was killed by the dragoons at his own fireside. The dint of the sword and the stains of the martyr's blood used to be pointed out on the stone as evidence. A square stone, erected in 1825, tells that "Here lies the corpse of John Semple, who was shot at Kilkerran, at command of Cornet James Douglas. Also here lies Thomas M'Clorgan, who was shot, uncertain by whom." A later monument was erected to the memory of John Stevenson, farmer in Camregan; Gilbert Martin, schoolmaster; and others,

who suffered in "the killing time." Pollok, author of the once fâmous *Course of Time*, visited the martyrs' graves in Carrick shortly before his death, and seems to have contemplated a work on this John Stevenson, who was a man renowned for his piety. Stevenson wrote an account of the "strange and remarkable providences he was trysted with," a record of wonderful escapes and successful prayers.

Within the old church there is a curious blue stone, called the Charter Stone of Old Dailly, which is said to have been a sanctuary for debtors. Near Killochan is another noteworthy stone, the "Baron's Stone," a huge boulder of granite, nearly forty tons in weight, which formed the "Hill of Justice" of the old Lairds of Killochan. In later years it engaged the pen of Sir Archibald Geikie, who traced its origin to the hills above Loch Doon. There is still another interest to geologists in Mulloch's Quarry, near Dalquharran, where Hugh Miller found the remains of "more trilobites, shells, and corals than he had at one time supposed all the Greywacke deposits on the south of Scotland could have furnished."

All the ancient families of Carrick are associated with one or other of the castles on the banks of the Girvan—the Kennedys with Bargany, Blairquhan, and Dalquharran; the Mures with Cloncaird, which is now the home of the head of the house of Wallace, the Cathcarts with Killochan, the Boyds with Penkill, and the Fergussons with Kilkerran. The modern Castle of Blairquhan is the finest building in the Girvan valley. It occupies the site of the

old keep of the Kennedys—with the river in front, and wooded slopes stretching towards the hills of Craigengower and Bennan for a background. The approach is a magnificent drive of over two miles, through beautiful woods that line the banks of the river. From the Kennedys, Blairquhan passed to the Whitefoords, the last of whom was Sir John Whitefoord of Ballochmyle, the friend and patron of Burns. He was ruined by the failure of the Douglas and Heron Bank, and had to sell Blairquhan as well as Ballochmyle; so here, too, Burns might have said:

> "I mourn'd the card that Fortune dealt
> To see where bonnie Whitefoords dwelt."

In the beginning of last century Blairquhan was purchased by the son of one of Burns's best Edinburgh friends, Sir James Hunter Blair, on whom he wrote an elegy, of which he himself said, "it is but mediocre, but my grief was sincere." Here is a stanza of it:

> "My patriot falls, but shall he lie unsung,
> While empty greatness saves a worthless name?
> No; every Muse shall join her tuneful tongue,
> And future ages hear his growing fame."

Hunter Blair was Lord Provost of Edinburgh from 1784 to 1786. He entertained Burns most hospitably in his house in Queen Street, and was anxious to do something to help a bard from his own county of Ayr. Unfortunately, he died shortly after Burns came to Edinburgh.

There have been Fergussons in Kilkerran since the time of Robert the Bruce. The narrow,

strong tower of "Kilkerran auld Castle" stands on the edge of a deep glen, at some distance to the south of the present mansion-house. A chapel to the Virgin gave the name *Lady Glen* to a charming dell beyond the gardens, where a path has been laid under silver firs by the side of the stream that flows through the glen. Sir Adam Fergusson, member of Parliament for Ayrshire for eighteen years, was the "aith-detesting, chaste Kilkerran" of Burns's *Earnest Cry and Prayer*, and the "maiden Kilkerran" of the *Election Ballads*. The conspicuous monument on Kildoon hill commemorates Sir Charles Fergusson, who died in 1849. The traditions of the honourable house were worthily upheld by his successor, Sir James Fergusson, who perished in the Jamaica earthquake in January 1907.

About half a mile from Old Dailly, in a romantic spot on the edge of Penwhapple Glen, stands Penkill Castle, an excellent example of a modernised keep, which may claim to be one of the most picturesque as well as one of the oldest inhabited houses in Ayrshire. "The oldest part of the building, a high, square block, with quoin turrets, and an enclosing wall and gate, was built by Adam Boyd sometime in the sixteenth century; a newer and more commodious portion was added in 1628, while the castle in its present state was the work of the late Spencer Boyd." That is a description from the pen of W. Bell Scott, who had his home at Penkill, and adorned its spiral staircase with a series of mural paintings, representing scenes from the "King's Quhair." Bell Scott was intimately associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood,

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and was held in high repute both as an artist and as a poet. Rossetti visited him at Penkill, and wrote sonnets in the Covenanters' Cave in the glen below the house. They visited the glens in the Girvan valley together. The wildness of the scenery seems to have terrified Rossetti, who was suffering from insomnia. Bell Scott has preserved in his *Autobiographical Notes* an account of their visit to the Black Linn of Lambdoughty Glen, near Straiton. "We all descended to the overhanging margin of the linn; but never shall I forget the expression of Gabriel's face, when he leant over the precipice, peering into the unfathomed water, dark as ink, in which sundry waifs flew round and round like lost souls in hell. In no natural spectacle had I ever known him to take any visible interest: the expression on his pale face did not indicate such interest. It said, as both Miss Boyd and I interpreted it, 'One step forward, and I am free!' But his daily talk of suicide had not given him courage. The chance so suddenly and unexpectedly brought within his grasp paralysed him. I advanced to him, trembling, I confess, for I could not speak. I could not have saved him. We were standing on a surface slippery as glass by the wet, green lichen. Suddenly he turned round and put his hand in mine — an action which showed he was losing his self-command, and that fear was mastering him. When we were all safely away, we all sat down together without a word, but with faces too conscious of each other's thoughts."

The old Castle of Bargany stood on the

brink of the river in front of the present house. It was a strong, high tower in the centre of a quadrangle, three of the corners of which were occupied by well-built towers, four storeys in height. The last of these towers was removed in the beginning of last century, and no trace is now left of the old castle. Bargany was the principal seat of that branch of the Kennedys whose long feud with the Kennedys of Dunure kept Carrick in a state that bordered on civil warfare. It came into the hands of the Hamiltons, afterwards Lords of Bargany, in the beginning of the seventeenth century. James, fourth Lord Bargany, is mentioned in an epitaph by Hamilton of Bangour:

> "With kind Bargany, faithful to his word,
> Whom heaven made good and social, though a lord."

At the side of the bridge by which the approach to Bargany crosses the Girvan, there is a laurel-covered eminence, called the "Butler's Brae," because the cottage of the butlers of Bargany once stood on its summit. In this cottage were born two of the minor poets and men of letters of Ayrshire. The first was Hamilton Paul, born in 1773. Paul was educated in Glasgow University, where he became intimate with Thomas Campbell. They were friendly rivals in verse composition for college prizes, and so equally were they matched that they agreed not to compete against one another for any prize. From college both went to tutorships in the West Highlands, and they kept up an interesting correspondence, encouraging each other in

poetic efforts, and criticising each other's effusions. At this time, Paul seems to have been regarded as the more likely to become a poet of note. On his return to the University, he passed through the Divinity Hall, and was licensed to preach. He then came to Ayr, where he varied the routine of preaching and tutoring with the work of a newspaper editor. He was the busiest man in the town. Every club, every social function, claimed his services; and he was the life and soul of every meeting. He would relieve the monotony of Presbytery dinners by reciting extemporary verses of little merit, but with some witty allusion to the events of the day, which brought a smile to the face of the soberest of Presbyters. He had a contract to supply the Alloway Burns Club, founded in 1801 by Burns's friend, John Ballantine, with an annual ode, and for nine years he faithfully performed it. Paul did not take himself seriously as a poet. Each set of his verses was written at a sitting, in the most perfunctory manner, and he did not expect for them more than they deserved—the favour of a day. In Ayrshire he is remembered for the many stories which he told so well, and for his witty sayings, some of which are still retailed; but to the world at large he is known as a devoted student of Burns, a leading spirit in the erection of the Doon Monument, and the saviour of the Auld Brig of Doon. In 1813 Paul was appointed minister of the parish of Broughton, where he settled down to a somewhat humdrum career. He died in 1854.

In 1792, when Paul was a student in Glasgow,

Hew Ainslie was born in the same little cottage by the Bridge of Bárgany. He was educated at Ballantrae and at Ayr Academy, and for a time he worked in the Bargany gardens. When Hew was in his seventeenth year, his father removed from Bargany to Roslin, and the lad obtained a situation as clerk in the Register House at Edinburgh. He began to write ballads, some of which fell into the hands of Robert Chambers, and were included in *Scottish Ballads.* For a time Ainslie acted as amanuensis to Dugald Stewart, but he does not seem to have enjoyed his work. At any rate, he returned to his desk in the Register House. In 1822 he sailed for America, where he spent a long life, dying at Louisville in 1876. In 1855 Ainslie published *Scottish Songs, Ballads, and Poems,* in New York; but his best known work is *A Pilgrimage to the Land of Burns*, originally published in 1822. This pilgrimage was undertaken in the summer of 1820 by Ainslie and two friends, to whom he gave the names of "Jingling Jock" and "Edie Ochiltree," while he himself assumed the title of "The Lang Linker." "Jingling Jock" was a clerk in Edinburgh, who afterwards became janitor and instructor of gymnastics in Dollar Academy. "Edie Ochiltree" was James Wellstood, a shawl-manufacturer in Edinburgh, and an amateur artist. The book contains a record, for the most part humorous, of the various adventures through which the three pilgrims passed in the course of their tour, and is of some value for the pictures it gives of the contemporaries of Burns whom they happened to meet at Mauchline and Alloway. The narrative is

enlivened with songs and ballads from the pen of Ainslie, and these constitute the chief charm and value of the *Pilgrimage*. The sentiments may be commonplace, and the verses may have too much of that alliterative jingle which is so dear to the minor poet; but there is a freshness and a natural vigour about some of Ainslie's ballads that place him far above the ordinary poetaster. There is a true poetic ring about the lines:

"It 's dowie in the hint o' hairst,
At the wa'-gang o' the swallow,
When the wind grows cauld, and the burns grow bauld,
And the wuds are hingin' yellow."

The sea appealed to Ainslie as it did not appeal to Burns, and he has faithfully expressed that longing which those who once have lived by the ocean know so well:

"Oh gi'e me a sough o' the auld saut sea,
A scent o' his brine again,
To stiffen the wilt that this wilderness
Has brocht on this breist and brain."

Indeed, one may safely affirm that Ainslie's songs descriptive of the sea are the best that Scotland has produced, not even excepting Allan Cunningham's "A wet sheet and a flowing sea." His "Rover of Lochryan" is little enough known to justify its quotation in full:

"The Rover o' Lochryan, he 's gane
Wi' his merry men sae brave;
Their hearts are o' the steel, an' a better keel
Ne'er bowl'd owre the back o' a wave.
It 's no when the loch lies dead in its trough,
When naething disturbs it ava,
But the rack an' the ride o' the restless tide,
An' the splash o' the grey sea-maw.

"It 's no when the yawl an' the licht skiffs crawl
Owre the breast o' the siller sea,
That I look to the west for the bark I lo'e best,
And the Rover that 's dear to me ;
But when that the clud lays its cheek to the flood,
And the sea lays its shouther to the shore,
When the win' sings heigh, an' the sea-whaups screigh
As they rise frae the deafening roar.

"It 's then that I look thro' the thickening rook
An' watch by the midnight tide ;
I ken the win' brings my Rover hame
An' the sea that he glories to ride.
Oh, merry he sits 'mong his jovial crew
Wi' the helm-heft in his hand,
An' he sings aloud to his boys in blue,
As his e'e's upon Galloway's land :

"'Unstent and slack each reef and tack,
Gi'e her sail, boys, while it may sit,
She has roared through a heavier sea before,
An' she 'll roar through a heavier yet.
When landsmen drouse, or trembling, rouse,
To the tempest's angry moan,
We dash through the drift, an' sing to the lift
O' the wave that heaves us on.'"

CHAPTER VII

THE COAST OF CARRICK

"'Twixt Wigton and the town of Ayr,
Portpatrick and the Cruives o' Cree,
Nae man need think for to bide there,
Unless he court wi' Kennedy."

WERE it not that the road is soft and hilly, one would be tempted to say that there is no finer drive in Ayrshire than by the shore from Ayr to Kirkoswald. The road runs parallel to the bold and rocky coast, and Arran, Cantire, and Ailsa are constantly in view. Just beyond the Doon, the ruins of Greenan Castle stand on a perpendicular cliff overhanging the sea.

"It stands upon the steep,
Like a monarch, grey and grim;
To its feet the mighty deep
Bears a never-failing hymn;
Disdainful through the haze—
While the drift flies gloomy past,
And the frightened seaman prays—
Frowns the ruin on the blast."

On past the Heads of Ayr the road winds round the Brown Hill of Carrick to the point of Dunure. On the slopes of the green hills that

rise to the left stand the ruins of Dunduff Castle, begun in the seventeenth century, and never finished. Half a mile to the south, a clump of trees surrounds the churchyard and the few stones that are left of the old Church of Kirkbride. Most impressive of all, the massive walls of Dunure (the fort of the yew), stand, like Greenan, on the very edge of the sea. For over two hundred years Dunure has been a ruin; but for four hundred years before that it was one of the strong keeps of Carrick, unassailable from the sea, and protected on the land side by moat and drawbridge. Tradition says it was built by the Danes. It is certain that it was the principal seat of the ancestors of the house of Kennedy. Notable men these early Kennedys were, whether they came of the stock of the ancient Galloway lords of Carrick or were sons of King Kenneth. There was James, Bishop of St Andrews, and Chancellor of Scotland, one of the regents during the minority of James III., and founder of St Salvator's College, St Andrews. There was his nephew, Walter Kennedy of Glentigh, the poet of whom Gavin Douglas wrote, in the *Palice of Honour:*

> "Of this nation I knew also anone
> Greit Kennedie and Dunbar yet undeid";

and whom Sir David Lyndsay praised:

> "Or quha can now the warkis countrefait,
> Off Kennedie with termes aureait?"

It was this Kennedy who took part with Dunbar in *The Flyting*, and whose share of honour from

GREENAN CASTLE. *Page* 87.

the poetic conflict was scarcely less than that of the great "makar." Indeed, in spite of his bitter invective, Dunbar held his rival in high esteem, or he would not have written in his *Lament:*

> "Gud Maister Walter Kennedy
> In poynt of dede lyis veraly;
> Gret ruth it wer that so suld be:
> Timor mortis conturbat me."

The head of the house, by this time Lord Cassillis, was one of the many Scottish nobles killed at Flodden. His grandson Quintin was that famous Abbot of Crossraguel who set the Lords of the Reformation at defiance, and faced John Knox in disputation on the mass. There was another, Gilbert, the fourth earl, whose name will not soon be forgotten. He was "ane werry greedy manne." The church was being despoiled, and he envied the rich possessions of the Abbey of Crossraguel, which were held by Allan Stewart, *Commendator*, as one who enjoyed the fruits of a benefice during a vacancy was called. At first Lord Gilbert tried to drive a bargain with the Commendator; but Stewart was the brother-in-law of Kennedy of Bargany, and did not choose to have dealings with the rival of his kinsman. The "Complainte" of Stewart to the Privy Council tells how Cassillis then resorted to force. With sixteen men, he surprised Stewart in the woods of Crossraguel, and persuaded him to accompany his party to Dunure. For two days he tried to coax him to grant a feu-charter of the lands of the abbey; but Stewart was immovable. On the third day, he had Stewart brought to the black vault of

Dunure, a bare apartment with a huge square chimney in one end. Stone seats ran round three sides of the square, and in the centre there was set an iron grate. Here Stewart was stripped, bound hand and foot, and fastened to the grate. The story is told *mutatis mutandis* in *Ivanhoe;* but Isaac the Jew was more fortunate than Commendator Stewart, for the roasting which was too hideous to describe in fiction did occur in fact, in one of the vaults under that grey ruin of Dunure. Bargany heard of his kinsman's evil plight, and roused the country to his rescue. "Brunt as he was," Stewart was carried to the Market Cross of Ayr, where he denounced Lord Cassillis; but punishment fell lightly on a powerful baron in those days, and the Privy Council did no more than order Earl Gilbert to find caution that he would not further molest Mr Allan Stewart.

A few miles along the coast, the Marquis of Ailsa, as the head of the house of Kennedy has been called since 1831, has his principal seat—Culzean (the place of the holly). The castle is a magnificent building, perched on a cliff that rises a hundred feet above the sea. As seen from a point on the Ayr road, some two miles to the north, castle and cliff seem to form one huge battlemented pile, standing in solitary grandeur, with the rolling sea before it and the woods of Mochrum stretching thick and dark behind. Strangers are granted permission to visit the grounds once a week, and hundreds annually avail themselves of the opportunity to enjoy the beautiful gardens, the terraced grounds, the miniature lake, the delightful walks under the

shade of stately trees, and, above all, the glorious view across the firth. The main portion of Culzean Castle was built, in 1777, on the site of an old keep called The Cove—from the coves (caves) which extend from the shore under the rock on which the castle stands. There are three caves, two of them over one hundred feet in length and from thirty to forty feet in breadth. These were supposed to be the abodes of fairies and other supernatural beings; it is to them Burns refers in *Halloween:*

> "Or for Colean the route is ta'en,
> Beneath the moon's pale beams;
> There, up the Cove, to stray an' rove
> Amang the rocks an' streams,
> To sport that night."

The third cave has never been fully explored. There are records of people who were glad to get out to the light of day after they had penetrated some three hundred feet into the heart of the rock; and there is a tradition that a piper who entered did not come out at all, though his pipes were heard playing underground about half a mile from the castle.

Carrick people claim that May Collean (or Colvin), the heroine of the ballad, *Fause Sir John,* was the daughter of a Kennedy of Culzean, and Ayrshire has so few traditional ballads that one hopes the claim is just. The story is, that

> "Fause Sir John a-wooing came
> To a maid of beauty rare;
> May Collean was the lady's name,
> Her father's only heir."

He persuaded the maid to mount and ride away with him, and

> "He rode on, and she rode on,
> As fast as they could flee,
> Until they came to a lonesome part—
> A rock abune the sea."

The rock is still pointed out to travellers from Girvan to Ballantrae. It is a lofty cliff on the Bennan Head, called Gamesloup.

> "'Light down, light down,' says fause Sir John,
> 'Your bridal bed you see;
> Here have I drowned seven king's daughters,
> The eighth one you shall be.'"

The maid begged that he would "turn him round about and look to the leaf of the tree," while she cast off her silken gown.

> "He turned himself straight round about,
> To look to the leaf of the tree;
> She has twined her arms around his waist,
> And thrown him into the sea."

He prayed in vain for help. The lady stood by until he drowned, and

> "So she went on her father's steed,
> As swift as she could gae;
> And she came hame to her father's gates
> At the breaking of the day."

Rather more than a mile from Culzean a road to the left leads to Kirkoswald, a quiet, unassuming village which is noteworthy only because of its associations with Burns. Here he came, in his seventeenth summer, to learn mensuration, at the school which Hugh Roger taught, on the ground floor of a two-storey

house opposite the churchyard gate. Already he was becoming conscious of his gift of language, and he delighted to exercise it in debates on all kinds of subjects, with his schoolfellow, Willie Niven, of Maybole. Indeed, on one occasion he challenged the dominie himself, and the master, being a man of sines and co-sines, was easily worsted, much to his own chagrin, and still more to the delight of his scholars. In Kirkoswald Burns had his first serious love affair; so serious, that the face of Peggy Thomson, "the charming fillette" who "upset his trigonometry," came between him and any further study. Strips of garden occupy the rising-ground behind the houses in the street, and it was while he was engaged in "taking the sun's altitude" in the garden behind the school, that he first saw Peggy, in the adjoining strip. Years afterwards, when he was taking leave of his Carrick relations before setting out for the West Indies, he met her, now the wife of his friend, John Neilson, and he gave her a copy of his poems, with these lines written on the blank leaf:

> "Once fondly lov'd, and still remember'd dear,
> Sweet early object of my youthful vows,
> Accept this mark of friendship, warm, sincere,
> Friendship! 'tis all cold duty now allows."

Doubtless Burns came to Kirkoswald because it was the home of his maternal ancestors. While he attended Roger's school, he lived at Ballochneil, a farmhouse about a mile from the village, close by the road to Girvan, on the banks of the Milton burn. His

uncle, Samuel Broun, lived there with his father-in-law, Robert Niven, the tenant of Ballochneil, and Burns shared an attic bed with the farmer's son. On the slopes above Ballochneil is the farm of Craigenton, which was tenanted by Burns's grandfather, Gilbert Broun, who died in 1774, two years before the poet's visit to Kirkoswald.

Kirkoswald has still another claim to be considered an important corner of the Burns country. There is a green knoll behind the farmhouse of Jameston, overlooking the fishing hamlet of Maidens. On this spot stood the farm of Shanter—*sean torr*, an old mound—in which Douglas Graham, farmer, smuggler, and dealer in malt, lived with his wife, Helen M'Taggart—a good housewife, but a querulous and superstitious dame with a shrewish tongue. No trace of the old Shanter farmhouse is left now; but a modern, white-washed building on the slope opposite Turnberry is called Tam o' Shanter's Farm. The people of Kirkoswald tell that Burns and his friend Niven were one evening driven, by stress of weather, to take shelter in the house of Shanter; that there they found Mrs Graham alone, anxiously awaiting the return of her husband from Ayr market, "nursing her wrath to keep it warm"; and that she gave the youths a sample of the speech her husband might expect when he did come home. Here is the burden of her complaint:

> "O Tam! had'st thou but been sae wise,
> As taen thy ain wife Kate's advice!
> She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,
> A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum;

That frae November till October
Ae market-day thou was nae sober ;
That ilka melder wi' the miller
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller ;
That every naig was ca'd a shoe on
The smith and thee gat roaring fou on ;
That at the L——d's house, ev'n on Sunday,
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.
She prophesy'd that, late or soon,
Thou wad be found deep drown'd in Doon ;
Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk
By Alloway's auld haunted kirk."

Burns was much amused by the good wife's vehemence, and delighted with the quaintness of some of the expressions she used. It is said that next morning, at Ballochneil, he scribbled some lines on the margin of a newspaper. They were the first draft of *Tam o' Shanter.* This may, or may not, be all true. It is heresy to doubt it in Kirkoswald. Every character can be identified. Tam and Kate are Douglas Graham and his wife drawn to the life. Graham used to go down to the Damhouse (now Ardlochan) on the shore, to have his corn ground by Hugh Broun, a relation of Burns himself, or to have his horses shod by John Niven. Johnnie Davidson, the "souter," lived at the Glenfoot of Ardlochan before he removed to the village of Kirkoswald, and it was no uncommon thing for the farmer to stay longer and to drink more than he ought on these occasions. The inn of the village beside the church, the Kirk-ton, was kept by Jean Kennedy and her younger sister, who were thought to affect airs above their station ; and hence their house was known as "The Leddies' House," which is supposed by some to be the L—d's house of the poem ; though the

good wife of Shanter wronged Kirkton Jean if she insinuated that the landlady joined Tam and his cronies in *their* drinking, for "the leddies" were sober and respectable. Even "Cutty Sark" is not without her Kirkoswald representative. An old woman, Kate Steven, lived by herself at Laighpark, in the parish; and her reputation for telling fortunes earned her the title of witch. Perhaps it was a convenient character for her to assume, seeing that she was hand-in-glove with the Kirkoswald smugglers, and accustomed to store the contraband goods they brought from the Isle of Man or from the Continent. Kirkoswald was at that time a centre of contraband trade, and Burns, who delighted to study mankind in every aspect, mixed freely with the smugglers. "Scenes of swaggering riot and roaring dissipation were new" to him, and he was a curious witness of them here. That he actually took part in them, and "looked unconcernedly on a large tavern-bill" which *he* had to settle, is incredible. It is unlikely that he spent as much pocket-money during his whole stay at Kirkoswald as would have discharged one such tavern-bill. Like most men of his temperament, Burns was fond of exaggerating his power of "standing liquor." As a matter of fact, his system refused an immoderate quantity of strong drink, and he drank less than most men of his time.

As in many other Scottish villages, the ruins of the old parish church of Kirkoswald stand in the middle of the churchyard. It was in this old church that John Knox preached the sermon that led to the controversy with Abbot

KIRKOSWALD.

Quintin of Crossraguel. Near the eastern end of the ruin, John Davidson lies beside his wife, Ann Gillespie, who was nurse to Burns's mother. It is the generally accepted opinion that Davidson was the true "Souter Johnnie." Burns knew him well, and had many a laugh at the "queer stories" the souter told. Davidson often accompanied Graham to Ayr on market-days, to purchase leather; and as often they came home together late and jolly. In the words of the author of *The Real Souter Johnnie*, published in Maybole in 1844, the souter

> ". . . was a gash wee fodgel body,
> Stood on his shanks baith tight and steady,
> As gleg 's a hawk, as tough 's a widdy;
> Had gabby skill
> To crack a joke wi' wit aye ready,
> Out owre a gill."

Between the church and the gate, three gravestones connected with the story of Burns stand close together. There is first the simple monument to Hugh Roger, the teacher of the "noted school on a smuggling coast," to which Burns came "to learn mensuration, surveying, dialling, etc." Beside it is the headstone of the tenants of Shanter Farm, with the inscription:

> "Erected by Douglas Graham, farmer in Shanter, and Helen his wife, in memory of their son, John Graham, who died December 10, 1785; aged 18 years.
> "Also Helen M'Taggart, his spouse, who died December 2, 1798; aged 56 years.
> "Also Douglas Graham, who died Feoruary 14, 1811; aged 72 years."

On the back of the stone some lines are carved, not such as one would naturally associate

with the memory of the immortal Tam o' Shanter:

> "The Lord of Life exalted stands,
> And, loudly calling, spreads his hands;
> He calls to thousand sinners round,
> And sends a voice from every wound.
> 'I purge from sin's detested stain,
> And make the crimson white again,
> Lead to celestial joys resign'd,
> And lasting as the deathless mind.'"

The third stone of the group stands over the grave of Burns's great-grand-parents (John Broun and Janet M'Grean) and grand-parents (Gilbert Broun and Agnes Renie). The old stone was threatening to decay, but in 1883 Dr Charles Rogers took steps to have it framed in a stronger stone, and it is now secure. The inscription on the stone itself is:

"Here lyes the corps of John Broun in Lyttletoun, who died March 3, 1724, aged 50; and Janet M'Grean, his spouse, who died March 28, 1738, aged 60; and Agnes Renie, who died May, 1742, aged 34; and Margaret Blain, who died June 5, 1751, aged 35, spouses to Gilbert Broun in Craigenton; and Agnes Stivn, who died 1748; also James Broun in Riddlestown, who died June 29, 1780, aged 65 years."

The name of Burns's grandfather—"Gilbert Broun, died 31 Oct., 1774, aged 66"—is concealed under the new stone.

On the base of the frame are carved these lines, which suggest what one hopes the author did not intend to say, that the "Carrick Lyre" was for ever burned out in the fire that here "flashed forth":

> "From simple sires the bard had sprung,
> The Scottish Harp who sweetly strung;
> 'Midst lowly scenes flash'd forth the fire
> That kindled up the Carrick lyre."

CHAPTER VIII

BRUCE IN CARRICK

"The winter worn in exile o'er,
I long'd for Carrick's kindred shore.
I thought upon my native Ayr,
And long'd to see the burly fare
That Clifford makes, whose lordly call
Now echoes through my father's hall."

SCOTT.

ONLY a few broken walls, standing on a rocky point where the coast curves inwards towards Girvan, are left of what was once the strong Castle of Turnberry. From its courtyard a lighthouse nightly flashes signals to Pladda and Ailsa. Golfers find ample scope for their longest driving in the fields which formed

"The Chase, a wide domain
Left for the Castle's sylvan reign."

Lest any should forget that they are on historic ground, "Bruce's Castle" is the name of the end green, with rocks in front and the sea behind, which the novice thinks as hard to take as Turnberry was in days of yore.

In 1186, Duncan, the first Lord of Carrick came to reside in Turnberry. His son left a daughter, Marjorie, to inherit his broad lands

After her first husband, Adam de Kilconquhar, had been killed in the Crusades, Marjorie became a royal ward. She was not disposed, however, to have her hand and her estates bestowed as a requital for some service to the sovereign, so she planned to be married according to her own choice. One day, as she was hunting with her squires and damsels in the woods of Carrick, she chanced to meet a wandering knight. His courteous mien and noble bearing won the young widow's admiration, and she invited him to join her party. This he seemed unwilling to do; but Marjorie, Countess of Carrick, was not accustomed to have her wishes denied. She gave a signal to her men; the knight was surrounded, and the lady herself led him captive to the Castle of Turnberry. It was a dangerous game in those days to court a ward of the king without his consent, but Marjorie came of a race to whom danger was sweet. She did the courting. In fifteen days the captive knight — Robert de Bruce—was quietly married to her. The loss of their estates was the penalty for this defiance of the royal authority; but, probably in consideration of Bruce's plea that the lady married him, a heavy fine brought them the king's peace, and all was well The son of this romantic marriage was Robert the Bruce, the restorer of Scottish liberty.

Countess Marjorie died in 1292, and Robert the Bruce became Earl of Carrick. In the early stages of the national struggle, he played a doubtful part. The heir to extensive estates in England, he swore fealty to Edward as a

matter of course. To him it seemed that the question at issue was not the independence of Scotland. That had already been surrendered. What remained to be determined was simply whether the house of Bruce or the house of Balliol was to be supreme in the northern kingdom. To this was due the inconsistency of his early years. After the murder of Comyn, however, there could be no faltering. From the day he was crowned King of Scotland, Bruce pursued a single purpose with dauntless courage and steadfast resolution in the face of difficulties that must have appeared insurmountable, through days of danger when the strength of his own arm alone could keep his life.

Bruce spent the winter of 1306 in Rachrin, and in the spring he sailed to Arran, whence he looked across the Firth to his own land of Carrick, lying five-and-twenty miles to the south-east. His heart was there. Surely, if anywhere, he would find support among his own folk. He sent one Cuthbert to spy the land, with instructions to light a fire on Turnberry Head if he saw any hope of a successful rising. Cuthbert found the people spiritless, and indifferent to the cause of Bruce. Percy held the castle, and the country was overrun by English soldiers. He kindled no fire, but by chance a fire was lit on the day appointed. It was probably no more than the customary "whin-burning"—

> "Yet grey-haired eld
> A superstitious credence held,
> That never did a mortal hand
> Wake its broad glare on Carrick strand."

Bruce saw the blaze, and with some three hundred men, set sail for the Carrick shore. When night fell he steered for the fire, where Cuthbert met him and told him the true state of affairs. Should he return or should he land? Edward Bruce answered for him: "Hap what may, in Carrick Carrick's lord must stay."

It was a dark night, but Bruce knew every inch of the ground about the castle in which his boyhood had been spent. Cautiously he led his men over the rocks, and past the castle towards the huts in which the English soldiers lay asleep. Shod in deerskin brogues, the Highlanders made not a sound until they reached the hamlet. Then, with wild yells, they fell upon the unsuspecting garrison, and slew them ere they realised their danger. Percy heard the fierce tumult, but did not dare to venture from the castle in the darkness. When morning broke, Bruce led his men, laden with spoil, to the hill country towards the east.

On one of the summits of the Hadyard Hills, in the parish of Dailly, there is a rude encampment which is said to have been built by Bruce's men. It commands a view of the whole land of Carrick. Behind it is the wildest region in the south of Scotland; a land of mountain and moor, of rushing streams and lonely lochs. There was little danger of attack from that quarter, and Bruce felt safe from open foes. It was not easy, however, to guard against traitors. Among the few men of Carrick who had joined him, was a kinsman of his own. He was a one-eyed, villainous-looking scoundrel, for whom Bruce had no love; but he had a

stout arm, and he brought two stalwart sons with him, so Bruce made him welcome. Early one morning Bruce was at some distance from the camp, attended by a single page. The king, as usual, carried his long sword, and the lad happened to have a bow and a single arrow. As they approached a small wood, they saw this Carrick fellow and his two sons coming towards them. The arms they bore betrayed their purpose, and Bruce shouted to them to come no nearer. "What?" cried the father, "who should be nearer you than I?" Bruce repeated his warning, and as they continued to approach, he snatched the bow from the hands of his page, and aimed so true that the arrow pierced the solitary eye of the traitor. As he fell, his sons rushed upon the king. The first aimed a blow at him with a heavy axe, but ere it fell the sword of Bruce flashed through the air and his assailant was smitten to the earth. The second made a fierce charge at Bruce with a long spear, but the king nimbly stepped aside to avoid the thrust. With one blow of his sword, he smote the head from the spear. With a second, he laid the last of the traitors low.

Want of food forced Bruce from his encampment among the Dailly Hills. With diminishing numbers, he wandered through the desolate country between Ayrshire and Galloway. To this day it is a country difficult of access, and but little known. The very names of its hills and lochs sound strange in our ears—Macaterick, Merrick, Corscrine, Mullwharchar. On the slopes of Shalloch-on-Minnoch, the sources of Girvan

and Stinchar lie within a mile of each other. Farther east is a cluster of peaks, encircling the southern extremity of Loch Doon. Across the border into Galloway the hills are higher still, and the lochs more deeply set. This is the land of the "Raiders," a grey, melancholy land, with a haunting charm that is all its own. Its lochs are many, and dark and deep, lying in treeless wastes under the shadow of hills. Only Loch Trool escapes the prevailing sombre tone. It lies open to the light of heaven, with pine woods stretching to its shores—the pride of Galloway, not only because of its charms, but also because it was the scene of Bruce's first success in his struggle for the Scottish throne.

He had many an anxious hour before he reached Loch Trool. On one occasion, a blood-hound guided two hundred men of Galloway to a morass where Bruce's small company had sought shelter. The position was guarded by a stream with banks so steep, that only at one place was it possible to cross, and even there two could not come abreast. Ever thoughtful of his men, Bruce left them to rest, while he, with two companions, went forth to reconnoitre. Soon he heard the baying of a hound, and in the moon-light he could make out the forms of his approach-ing enemies. Sending back his servants to rouse the troops, he himself took up his stand at the ford and calmly awaited the attack. Only one could come against him at a time, and the first assailant fell before his spear. His horse falling, made the pass still more difficult for those behind. One by one they rushed forward upon the tireless spear of Bruce, until when his men came to his

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aid they found fourteen slain before him, and the men of Galloway in flight.

Douglas and Edward Bruce now joined the king, and they withdrew their united forces, which did not exceed three hundred men, into the fastnesses of that bleak tableland which stretches eastwards towards Cumnock, and from which Nith and Afton flow to the north, and Ken and Deugh to the south. Douglas had learned that Sir Aymer de Valence was gathering a force of Englishmen and Lowlanders

> "For to hunt him out of the land,
> With hund and horn, rycht as he were
> A volf, a theif, or thefis fere."

In due time they saw De Valence's force approaching, and Bruce determined to give him battle. He was not aware that John of Lorn was coming up from the other side with eight hundred men, hoping to catch Bruce in a trap. Fortunately, this new force was spied in time to give a chance of escape. Fixing a meeting-place in Galloway, Bruce divided his men into three companies, and ordered them to seek safety in flight by different routes. He himself, with a hundred men, made for the head of Loch Doon. By some means or other, Lorn had got possession of a bloodhound which had once belonged to Bruce, and was deeply attached to its former master. The dog at once picked up the trail of Bruce's company, and Lorn pressed on them so fast that the king ordered his men to disperse, and to look each one to his own safety. He and his foster-brother hastened towards a forest on the borders of Galloway. The hound was not to

be deceived. Lorn came so near that he could see the two men, one of whom he knew to be the king, on the slopes in front of him, and he ordered five of the strongest and fleetest of his followers to run on ahead and intercept the fugitives. Soon they overtook them. Three attacked the king, and two his foster-brother. The first to rush at Bruce fell so suddenly before the fierce sweep of his sword that the other two hesitated just long enough to allow Bruce to bound to the side of his companion, who was being hard pressed by his two assailants. It was the work of a moment to cut one of them down, and then Bruce turned to meet the remaining two of his own opponents. In the end all five were slain, and the victors reached the wood in safety. Still the unerring instinct of the too faithful hound led on the main body of the pursuers, and Bruce was now so utterly worn out that he declared he could go no farther. Some say that his companion then left him, and ran back to meet the pursuing force. Concealing himself in a bush, he shot the hound with an arrow, and so stayed the pursuit. Others say that Bruce and his companion escaped by wading down the bed of a stream, thus causing the dog to lose the scent. Barbour gives both versions of the story:

> "Bot quhethir his eschaping fell
> As I tald first, or now I tell,
> I wat it weill, without lesyng,
> At that burn eschapit the king."

They were not yet, however, free from danger. As they crossed a moor that was "bath hee, and lang, and braid," they met three

armed men, one of whom carried a sheep upon his back.

"Whither go ye?" asked the king.

"We seek Robert the Bruce. We would make our dwelling with him."

"If that is so," said Bruce, "come with me, and I shall let you see him."

His speech betrayed him, and he saw by the change in their countenances that they were no friends of his. He therefore ordered them to march on ahead, while he and his foster-brother followed close behind. Presently they came to an empty hut, where the sheep was killed, a fire kindled, and supper prepared. Bruce insisted that he and his man should occupy one end of the building, and that the strangers should keep to the other. After a hearty supper, Bruce sought the sleep of which he stood so much in need; but he asked his man to keep watch, lest the three strangers should attempt treachery. Fortunately, the king slept very lightly, for his companion soon dropped off into a heavy slumber. A movement in the other end of the hut awoke Bruce, who sprang to his feet just as the three men made a rush towards him. With a hearty kick, he tried to rouse his sleeping companion; but before he could rise, one of the men had given him a mortal wound. It was now a desperate struggle between the three well-armed caitiffs and the exhausted king; but, though he was more straitly beset than ever he had been before, "throu goddis grace and his manheid" he slew all three.

After various adventures in Galloway, Bruce returned to Carrick, where once again he had an

encounter with three traitors. He had gone out to hunt, and with him were two hounds; he saw three men coming against him with bows and arrows.

"For shame!" said Bruce. "I am one and ye are three. Lay down your bows, and come at me with your swords. The greater honour will be yours if ye vanquish me."

"Perfay," said one of them, "no man shall say we feared you so that we killed you with arrows."

They therefore threw away their bows and drew their swords. It was more chivalrous than well-advised. The Bruce smote the first to the ground; his hound pulled down the second; the third fled, but was soon overtaken by the dogs and killed. "I killed but one," said Bruce afterwards to his men; "God and my hounds slew two."

The fame of these successes went abroad, and men began to gather round Bruce. Soon he had all Carrick with him. Kyle and Cunninghame followed. Somewhere near Kilmarnock Douglas overcame De Mowbray; and in the early summer of 1307 Bruce gained his first open battle, the result of a formal challenge sent by De Valence to Bruce. The English were in a majority of five to one; but Bruce chose his position so skilfully, on the face of Loudoun Hill with peat mosses on either flank, that he gained a complete victory. Henceforward success followed success, until Bannockburn decided that Scotland was to be an independent kingdom. In 1315 Bruce met his first Parliament in Ayr, and the crown of Scotland was formally settled upon him and his house.

CHAPTER IX

THE AYR

"We 'll sing auld Coila's plains an' fells,
Her moors red-brown wi' heather bells,
Her banks an' braes, her dens an' dells."

"The Muse, nae Poet ever fand her,
Till by himsel' he learned to wander,
Adown some trottin' burn's meander
An' no think lang."

Thus Burns sang, and to no part of his poetic creed was he more faithful. Whether he courted muse or maid, his favourite resort was some walk

"Down by the burn, where scented birks
Wi' dew are hanging clear, my jo."

It was nature, living, moving, and vocal, that appealed to Burns. The mystery of the silent hills, the deep solemnity of ancient woods, affected him less than the "bickering brattle" of the running streams, or the sound of the wind howling among swaying trees. His native country is a land of many waters, and it was his ambition to

"Gar our streams an' burnies shine
Up wi' the best."

A volume might be written on the streams which he celebrated in song, and his claim to be a poet of nature might be established by recalling his perfect descriptions of the charms of brook and river, from the oft-quoted stanza in "Halloween" to such a single line as "wi' the burn stealing under the lang, yellow broom." Though he wandered by "crystal Devon," or along the "flowery banks of Cree"—though he found inspiration by winding Nith and among the hazels on Cluden side—Irvine, Lugar, Ayr, and Doon, the rivers of his own country, were first in his affections, and have first claim to be called the streams of Burns.

Of these, the Ayr is most intimately bound up with his memory. From Catrine to Ayr it flows through the middle of his native Kyle, past Mauchline and Tarbolton, through the woods of Ballochmyle and Barskimming, for the most part between steep banks of deeply scarred red sandstone, "o'erhung with wild woods thick'ning green." At every bend of its course some fresh interest to the lover of the poet is disclosed. Just out from Ayr is Craigie House, the home of the childhood of his friend and correspondent, Mrs Dunlop, a daughter of the house of Wallace. The Wallaces of Craigie claimed kinship with the patriot. Their ancestral home was farther north, in the parish of Craigie, where the ruins of the old castle may still be seen. Towards the close of the sixteenth century they acquired the Castle of Newton-on-Ayr; and there they had their principal residence, until Mrs Dunlop's father built this house among the trees on the banks of the Ayr.

Mrs Dunlop's letters to Burns, after having lain under lock and key for a century, have at last been published, under the able editorship of Dr William Wallace. We cannot pass them by without a word. They reveal one of the most interesting characters in the history of Burns. Their very prolixity has a charm; and they throw fresh light on the events of the last ten years of the poet's life. Mrs Dunlop was bowed down with grief, ill in health, and distressed in mind, her every interest buried in her husband's grave, when Burns's poems roused her from despondency. With a pardonable pride in her ancestry, she half playfully adopted him as the bard of her house, and thereby claimed the right to censure everything unworthy in his work or in his life. It was her ambition to be to him as Madame du Châtelet was to Voltaire—"an old woman" to whom he was to read all his manuscripts, while at her dictation he should reject every objectionable epithet. It is true that her critical sense was defective. She saw no fault in "The Cotter's Saturday Night," and no merit in "Tam o' Shanter"; but her criticisms had always the merit of being absolutely frank. She was equally courageous in dealing with his conduct; yet it was all done with such an air of personal regard, such an appearance of maternal anxiety, that, even when she questioned Burns concerning his pre-nuptial relations with Jean Armour, it would have been "caddish" of him to be resentful.

She interested herself warmly in his worldly prospects. She engaged the influence of Dr Moore and of Adam Smith in his behalf. She would have done all in her power to have him

elected to a Professorship of Agriculture at Edinburgh University, if Burns had been willing to become a candidate. Although she did not approve of his entering the Excise, she did not fail to seek influence to secure his promotion. Burns paid several visits to Dunlop House. In one of the rhyming essays which she sent him, she described his appearance on his first visit:

> "Genius and humour sparkle in the eyes,
> Frank independence native ease supplys.
> Good sense and manly spirit mark the air,
> And mirth and obstinacy too were there.
> A peering glance sarcastic wit confest,
> The milk of human kindness fill'd the breast."

Lest he should be unduly puffed up, she gave her cook's opinion of him:

> "Yon chiel gade in wi' spurs and boots,
> Is daft Rob Burns, that prents and shoots,
> Does nought but cast about quire clashes,
> And rant and rin and chase the lasses."

Then she has a word to say of his manners:

> "Giff that be Burns, he may hae lear,
> But faith! I'm sure he has nae mair.
> He 's brought his havins (manners) frae the plough,
> Ne'er touched his hat, nor made a bow;
> Lap on his horse, and pu'd his coat thegither,
> Clash'd to the Major's gin he'd been his brother.
> He may write books, but by his gate,
> He 's little sense and vera great conceit."

The house that crowns the wooded eminence to the south of the river opposite Craigie, is Castlehill, the home of another good friend of Burns, John Ballantine, "skill'd in the secret, to bestow with grace," to whom "The Brigs of Ayr" was inscribed. Such men as Ballantine

THE TRYSTING THORN. *Page* 114.

were the true patrons of Burns, ready with help when help was needed, making no attempt to "lionise" the ploughman bard, and careful not to offend the proud spirit of independence which was the poet's boast.

At Auchincruive the distinctive scenery of the Ayr begins. One suspects Burns had it in mind when he wrote "The Birks of Aberfeldy."

> "The braes ascend like lofty wa's,
> The foaming stream deep roaring fa's,
> O'erhung wi' fragrant, spreading shaws."

A path at the base of the cliff leads along the river's edge, and affords an opportunity to view "Wallace's seat," where are the remains of the cave into which he is reported by local tradition to have slipped when pursuers pressed hard upon him, disappearing so suddenly from their sight, that they did not realise the nature of his retreat till they found themselves falling headlong into the bed of the river.

At a beautiful curve of the water, the Ayr is joined by the Coyle, from the Covenanters' Hill, Benbeoch, near Dalmellington. It is a typical Ayrshire stream, now stealing through deep and narrow channels, then broadening out into fertile valleys. Burns knew it well, and two of the most charming spots in its course have been enshrined in his verses.

> "Where, hid behind a spreading wood,
> An ancient, Pict-built mansion stood,
> I spy'd among an angel brood,
> A female pair."

The "ancient Pict-built mansion" is Sundrum,

situated, as its name implies, on a tree-clad ridge, at the base of which the Coyle is brawling past. The stanza quoted did not come up to Burns's standard for publication, and was suppressed when it had served its purpose of complimenting the Hamiltons and Montgomeries.

Farther up the Coyle is the home to which Burns pictured the "poor and honest sodger" returning:

> "At length I reached the bonnie glen,
> Where early life I sported;
> I passed the mill and trysting thorn,
> Where Nancy aft I courted."

It is a proof of Burns's love for his native streams that, though this poem was written on the banks of Nith, he transferred the scene to Ayrshire. He remembered the old Mill of Mannoch on the Coyle, saw again the burn sweeping round it under the shade of lordly ash and elm, and could not fancy a more fitting spot to bring the weary wayfarer to rest.

There is no more charming spot on the river than the little village of Stair. From the bridge one looks past the peaceful church and churchyard to Stair House, standing amid the remains of the woods which Field-Marshal Lord Stair is said to have planted to represent the disposition of the British forces at the Battle of Dettingen. A few picturesque thatched cottages peep over holly bushes to the left; and in the rear the white walls of Enterkine House, the scene of the *Fête Champêtre* celebrated by Burns in 1788, shine through the trees. Stair House is old and interesting. In its kitchen Burns and David Sillar sat, while Davie wooed in vain

"his Meg, his dearest part," and Burns, say the people of Stair, passed the time in flirting with Betty Campbell. In its drawing-room, the poet made his first acquaintance with high-born ladies, when Mrs Stewart asked to see the young farmer who had written the songs her maids were lilting. Mrs Stewart was a daughter of the house of Gordon, in whose records Mr Crockett found the materials for *Men of the Moss-Hags.* Burns never forgot the kindness of his reception in the drawing-room of Stair. He recalled it in "The Brigs of Ayr" when he wrote:

> "Benevolence, with mild, benignant air,
> A female form, came from the towers of Stair."

He thanked her in the letters which accompanied the poems he sent in 1786, and again in 1791. In the cottage at Alloway the second collection is preserved with the poet's inscription: "To Mrs General Stewart of Afton—the first person of her sex and rank that patronised his humble lays—this manuscript collection of poems is presented, with the sincerest emotions of grateful respect, by the Author." In all, it contains thirteen poems, the first of which is "A Mother's Lament for the Death of her only Son," which was his elegy on the death of Mrs Stewart's son, who died, while yet a lad, at Strassburg in 1787. Only a month before, Mrs Fergusson of Craigdarroch had also been bereaved, and the poet, as he not infrequently did, made the elegy do double duty. Mrs Stewart was the heiress of Afton, and she named the house in which she spent her declining years, Afton Lodge. In

honour of her native glen, Burns wrote "Sweet Afton," that charming song, which is at once a compliment to his patroness and a tribute to the beauty of a Nithsdale stream.

To tell the story of the Dalrymples of Stair, would be to write the history of Scotland. The wife of a Dalrymple was one of the Lollards of Kyle. A head of the house was a leader of the Reformation. The first Viscount was a Lord of Session under Cromwell's rule, an exile for his opposition to the Test Act, and a companion of William of Orange in his voyage to Torquay in 1688. His son, the first Earl of Stair, was one of the promoters of the Revolution; on him lay the odium of the horrible massacre of Glencoe; he was so earnest an advocate of the Parliamentary Union, that his death in 1707 was due to exhaustion after an eloquent appeal to the Scots Parliament on its behalf. The second Earl fought with Marlborough through all his campaigns; to him was entrusted the delicate mission of opposing Jacobite intrigue at the French court; he was made a Field-Marshal and Commander-in-Chief of the army in Flanders, and fought under George II. at Dettingen. "The family of Dalrymple," says Sir Walter Scott, "has produced, within the space of two centuries, as many men of talent, civil and military, and of literary, political, and professional eminence, as any house in Scotland." One might search the history of Scotland in vain for another such family as that of James Dalrymple, first Viscount Stair. He himself was soldier, philosopher, and lawyer, the author of legal works which have scarcely yet been

superseded. His wife was Dame Margaret Ross, the prototype of Lady Ashton. Of his four sons, the first was Earl of Stair; the second, Sir James Dalrymple of Borthwick, a Scottish historian; the third, Sir Hugh of North Berwick, a President of the Court of Session; and the fourth, Sir David of Hailes, grandfather of another and a greater historian, Lord Hailes. In *The Bride of Lammermoor*, the genius of Sir Walter Scott has preserved for all time the sad story of the daughter of this illustrious family. Perhaps in that very drawing-room in which Robert Burns recited his first love-songs, Janet Dalrymple sang to the lute a plaint for her secret lover. By the banks of Ayr she may have strayed, fingering her broken piece of gold, in happy ignorance of the "world's wonder" she was doomed to be. "Lucy Ashton's" marriage was celebrated not at Stair, but at Carsecreuch, her mother's house in Wigtownshire.

The home of Lord Stair is now in Wigtownshire, where recently (December 1903), the late earl, the honoured Chancellor of Glasgow University, passed to his fathers; the patrimonial lands of Stair, after having been alienated for a century, were acquired by the then Lord Stair about 1825, and are still in the possession of his descendants.

Tradition says that the Coyle, Coylton, Coilsfield, and Kyle itself preserve the memory of an ancient king of Britain, perhaps that jolly king of the ballad who "called for his fiddlers three." Burns had no doubt on the point:

> "'Twas in that place o' Scotland's isle,
> That bears the name o' auld King Coil,"

are the opening lines of "The Twa Dogs"; and on Coila's mantle he saw the place "where a sceptr'd Pictish shade stalk'd round his ashes lowly laid." History disproves all this—at least, the proofs on which the tradition rests do not satisfy those excellent and accurate investigators who soon will have "our hills and seas and streams dispeopled of their dreams";—but we ramblers in the footsteps of a poet can afford to be less critical. "Kyle for a man," says the old rhyme, and, unless it were prophetic, who should that man be but Coilus, King of the Britons, who, in days not reached by authentic history, fought for his home against the invading Picts and Scots? There was a short, sharp conflict on the banks of Doon. Coilus was completely overpowered, and fled through the forest which then covered the whole of this region. For a space his flight was stayed by the flooded waters of this stream which bears his name; but he and his comrades in flight found at last a ford, which still is called the "King's Steps," and they hastened eastward. On the banks of a little stream that joins the Fail they were overtaken, and forced to make a stand. One by one they were cut down, till the brook ran red, and won its name, "The Bloody Burn," and in the "Dead-men's-holm" the rank and file were laid in a common grave. Coilus and his chiefs received more honourable burial. After cremation, their calcined bones were placed in urns of hardened clay. The urns were carefully deposited in the earth; over them flat stones were laid; earth and boulders were piled up until a mound was made; and on the top two large stones were set, to mark the place of sepulture. Since

then it has borne the name Coils-field. Nearly seventy years ago the mound was opened. This account appeared in the local journals of the day: —"On the evening of May 29, 1837, in presence of several gentlemen, the two large stones were removed. The centre of the mound was found to be occupied by boulder stones, some of them of considerable size. When the excavators had reached the depth of about four feet, they came on a flag-stone of a circular form, of about three feet in diameter. Under the circular stone was first a quantity of dry, yellow-coloured sandy clay —then a small flag-stone laid horizontally, covering the mouth of an urn filled with white-coloured burnt bones."

It was thus proved that some persons of distinction had been buried there in the days when cremation was the custom, and the traditional story of King Coil, which place-names had kept alive, received a measure of confirmation.

Burns had not been long at Lochlea till he found his way, with other lads of Tarbolton, to see the maids at Coilsfield. His ready address and fluent tongue made him a favourite "black-foot" with the bashful, speechless ploughmen and weavers of his acquaintance; and, as it was not his nature to assist a friend to sweets of courtship which were denied to himself, he laid siege to the heart of the housekeeper, his "Montgomerie's Peggy," to whom he vowed:

> Were I a Baron proud and high,
> And horse and servants waiting ready,
> Then a' 'twad gie o' joy to me,
> The shairin 't wi' Montgomerie's Peggy."

He was no baron, however, but a poor farmer's

son with an income of seven pounds a year; and the lady, though she accepted his verses, rejected his suit, all the more readily that she had plighted her troth to another.

At that time Coilsfield House was a sturdy Scottish keep, which had been the home of Cunninghames and Montgomeries for generations—the "martial race, bold, soldier-featur'd, undismay'd" of the Vision. Its proprietor was Colonel Hugh Montgomery, "sodger Hugh, my watchman stented," who afterwards became twelfth Earl of Eglintoun, and built the present House of Montgomery, with its graceful wings and Grecian portico, on the site of the paternal castle. The house is hidden among the woods through which the Fail steals its way to join the Ayr. In the beautiful grounds around it is the mound which formed the grave of King Coilus, and the remains of a Roman camp are not far off. It is for none of these things, however, that this is a sacred spot in the Burns country. Let the poet himself tell why we linger here:

"Ye banks and braes and streams around
The castle o' Montgomerie,
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie!
There simmer first unfauld her robes,
And there the langest tarry!
For there I took the last fareweel
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

"How sweetly bloom'd the gay, green birk,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade
I clasp'd her to my bosom!

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The golden hours, on angel wings,
Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me, as light and life,
Was my sweet Highland Mary.

"Wi' monie a vow, and lock'd embrace,
Our parting was fu' tender;
And pledging aft to meet again,
We tore oursels asunder;
But O, fell Death's untimely frost,
That nipt my flower sae early!
Now green 's the sod, and cauld 's the clay,
That wraps my Highland Mary!

"O, pale, pale now, those rosy lips
I aft hae kiss'd sae fondly!
And closed for ay the sparkling glance,
That dwalt on me sae kindly!
And mould'ring now in silent dust,
That heart that lo'ed me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core
Shall live my Highland Mary."

No chapter in the history of Burns has been more diversely written than that which relates to Highland Mary. Though she inspired some of his finest and most famous poems, he is unusually reticent concerning her in his prose, telling us little more than the story of their parting on the banks of Ayr, and of her sudden death in Greenock. It is generally believed that her name was Mary Campbell; that she was a native of Dunoon; that she was at one time dairy-maid at Coilsfield, and at another nursemaid at Gavin Hamilton's in Mauchline; that the parting was on Sunday, May 14, 1786; and that she died in Greenock in October of that year. Men have peered into her character with microscopes—kirk-session records have been ransacked, every

tittle of village gossip has been noted down;—and she has appeared at one time as "the white rose that grew up and bloomed in the midst of his passion flowers," at another as "something of a light-skirts," and at yet another as merely a creature of the poet's imagination. The conclusion of the whole matter is, that the details of her story will never be known with certainty. Of what value as evidence are the records of the misdeeds of a Mary Campbell, when there were dozens of Mary Campbells in Ayrshire? How will one explain away Burns's own statement that her "bosom was fraught with truth, honour, constancy, and love"? If he is to be believed, there was a Highland Mary, "a warm-hearted, charming, young creature," from whom he parted "after a pretty long tract of the most ardent reciprocal attachment," never to meet again.

From Burns himself also we may learn all we can know with certainty of the scene of the farewell meeting:

"That sacred hour can I forget?
Can I forget the hallowed grove,
Where by the winding Ayr we met,
To live one day of parting love?

. . . . . .

"Ayr, gurgling, kiss'd his pebbled shore,
O'erhung with wild woods, thick'ning green;
The fragrant birch and hawthorn hoar,
'Twin'd am'rous round the raptur'd scene."

Cromek was responsible for the fanciful description of the final parting, which has led curious investigators to wander along the streams in the vicinity with foot-rules in their hands to discover the exact spot where the lovers stood. "This adieu," he says, "was performed with all those

FAILFORD—WHERE RIVERS FAIL AND AYR MEET.

simple and striking ceremonials which rustic sentiment has devised to prolong tender emotions and to inspire awe. The lovers stood on each side of a small purling brook; they laved their hands in its limpid stream, and, holding a bible between them, pronounced their vows to be faithful to each other. They parted—never to meet again."

A thorn-tree on the banks of the Fail near the Castle of Montgomery, was supposed to mark the spot; but it has now completely disappeared. With patient ingenuity, it has been argued that the parting was on the Alton, a tributary of the Fail; and with equal patience, it has been shown that the Mauchline Burn must have been that across which the lovers clasped hands. Hamilton Paul says: "Let the traveller from Ayr to Mauchline pause at the spot where the Fail disembogues itself into the Ayr. Let him take his station near the neat little cottage on the sloping green at the side of the wood, and let him cast his eyes across the stream where the trees recede from one another and form a vista on the grey rocks, which, mantled over with tangling shrubs, wild roses, heath and honeysuckle, project from the opposite side,—and we will tell him that there, or thereabout, the poet took his last farewell of his sweet Highland Mary."

The traveller who does that will at least enjoy a pleasant view; and if he cross the road and knock at the door of one of the cottages in the little hamlet of Failford, an old lady will conduct him through a sanded close into a trim-kept garden, and thence to a green bank, beneath

which flows the Ayr. She will point him out a stone in the middle of the stream, marking the spot at which the poet and Highland Mary stood to plight their faith, as they crossed the ford from the wooded banks on the other side. He will, at least, never regret having seen one of the most charming spots on "the bonnie banks of Ayr."

There are several places of interest on the little stream that flows through the grounds of Coilsfield. One of its feeders springs from the hill of Barnweill, from which, according to a tradition that, notwithstanding the monument on the spot, is far from trustworthy, Wallace viewed the burning of the Barns of Ayr. On the Fail, too, is all that is left of the monastery (in which Thomas the Rhymer was once a guest), the home of the jovial monks, who will long be remembered by the rhyme in Ramsay's *Evergreen*, quoted by Scott in *The Abbot:*

> "The Friars of Fail drank berry-brown ale,
> The best that e'er was tasted;
> The Monks of Melrose made gude kale
> On Fridays, when they fasted."

More famous than any of the *Fratres de Redemptione Captivorum* who dwelt in the monastery during the three centuries of its existence, was the Warlock Laird, who made part of the building his castle. Some of his pranks —they were no more—are recounted in a ballad by Joseph Train, and a strange story is told of a dreadful storm and the downfall of the castle on the day of his funeral.

The road from Tarbolton to Mauchline crosses the Fail near Willie's Mill, known to every one who has read "Death and Doctor Hornbook."

The stone on which the poet and the spectre "eased their shanks" is still pointed out at the side of the road that leads to the village. William Muir, the miller, was an intimate friend of Burns. Tradition says that the poet used to meet "Montgomerie's Peggy" at the mill. When Jean Armour was turned from her father's door in her second disgrace, she found shelter with the Muirs, until Burns rented the room in Mauchline in which they set up house. Burns never forgot their kindness on that occasion. He exerted himself to procure a favourable settlement for Mrs Muir on her husband's death, in 1793. He wrote an epitaph "On my own Friend and my Father's Friend, William Muir in Tarbolton Mill":

"An honest man here lies at rest,
As e'er God with His image blest;
The friend of man, the friend of truth,
The friend of age, and guide of youth:
Few hearts like his with virtue warm'd,
Few heads with knowledge so inform'd;
If there 's another world, he lives in bliss,
If there is none, he made the best of this."

CHAPTER X

TARBOLTON AND LOCHLEA

"The star that rules my luckless lot,
Has fated me the russet coat,
An' damn'd my fortune to the groat;
But, in requit,
Has blest me with a random-shot
O' countra wit."

LIKE many other Scottish villages, Tarbolton has seen better days. There was a time when the click of the weaver's shuttle was heard in almost every house in its streets. Now the number of villagers engaged in weaving silk is few indeed, and soon the days of hand-loom weaving will be for ever gone. No industry has succeeded it in Tarbolton, and the people of the village have been driven to towns and cities and across the seas to seek a livelihood. Even in the principal street many of the houses in which the weavers lived and wrought are still standing, their low, thatched roofs and overhanging eaves giving the place a quaint picturesqueness in spite of the evident signs of decay in crazy walls and tumbling roofs.

Tarbolton is an ancient village. If the derivation of its name from Tor-Bal-teine (the

WILLIE'S MILL. *Page* 124.

hill of Baal's fire), be correct, there must have been a clachan there in pre-Christian times. The hill on which the fire was lit by Pagan priests is that round which the road to Mauchline passes as it leaves the village. The meaning of the ancient rite has been forgotten, but the custom of lighting a fire on the hill still survives. On an evening in June, the boys of the village go from house to house demanding fuel for the bonfire. They carry this fuel to a particular part of the hill, where they pile it up on a kind of altar of turf. At sunset the bonfire is lit. The old folks come out and march round the hill, and for hours the youths amuse themselves by leaping on the turf walls of the altar, as the worshippers of Baal used to do ages ago. Until recently, the June Fair was the great event of the year in Tarbolton. From far and near droves of cattle were brought to be sold; travelling shows of every description congregated round the hill; farmers and dealers came to buy and sell, to settle accounts, and to meet old friends; in the afternoon, lads and lasses gathered in from all the farms round about, to give and get their "fairings"; and the long evening was given up to jollity.

Ancient as it is, there is little to interest the stranger in the history of Tarbolton, apart from Burns. The famous covenanting prophet, Peden, was schoolmaster, session-clerk, and precentor there before he became a minister. During the time of the persecution, he used to shelter in a cave on the banks of Ayr near Coilsholm. In a secluded spot in the woods, there is a projecting mass of sandstone which is called

Peden's Pulpit. From this he used to preach to the people gathered in the open space between the pulpit and the river.

One martyr sleeps in the old churchyard—a young man, named William Shillilaw, who was shot without a trial by a company of dragoons from Sorn Castle, because he refused to acknowledge Episcopacy. Three Ritchies, who were ministers of the parish, lie in the same kirkyard, the first of them a Professor of Divinity in Edinburgh in his day. There also is the grave of Dr Peter Wodrow, son of the church historian, who was minister in Burns's time. He was an old man when Burns knew him, and in 1782 John M'Math was appointed his assistant and successor. Both Wodrow and his assistant were Moderates, and therefore esteemed by Burns, who was on friendly enough terms with M'Math to send him a copy of "Holy Willie's Prayer," accompanied by a rhyming epistle. The two ministers appear together in "The Twa Herds.'

> "Auld Wodrow lang has hatch'd mischief,
> We thought ay, death wad bring relief,
> But he has gotten, to our grief,
> Ane to succeed him,
> A chield wha'll soundly buff our beef;
> I meikle dread him."

Burns was in his nineteenth year when his father came to reside in the parish of Tarbolton, at the farm of Lochlea, which lies about two miles and a half from the village on the ridge between the valleys of the Ayr and the Irvine. The house itself is in a hollow, but from the rising ground on the farm one looks across the Cessnock towards the Galston Muirs, over which,

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one "simmer Sunday morn, the risin' sun, wi' glorious light was glintin'." The low hills of Craigie shut in the view towards the north, but away to the left the Arran peaks are clearly seen, and to the south the wooded slopes of Carrick delight the eye. It is now a modern, comfortable-looking farmhouse, with nothing striking or particularly attractive about it. The only actual relic of the poet is a stone lintel, which records that it is "the lintel of the poet's barn." The fields are well-cultivated and fertile, and there is an air of prosperity about the place which was not there when William Burnes was tenant. In his day the soil was wet and sour; the loch which gave the farm its name was still in existence, and drainage was not thought of. In a letter to his cousin in Montrose in 1783, Burns complained of the barrenness of the land, of the need for improved methods of agriculture, and of the difficulty of discovering or applying them. The implements, from the heavy plough to the reaping-hook, were still of the clumsiest kind; draining, liming, and scientific manuring were not understood; the land was scourged by a continual succession of oats, until it would not bear enough to pay the seed, and then it was allowed to lie fallow for three or more years; the harvest operations were so prolonged that the farmer was completely at the mercy of the weather, and a wet season was almost ruin to him; the rotation of crops was unknown; the cattle picked up a poor living among the weeds and rushes which overgrew the pasture-land; and the wonder is that the farmer in Lochlea was able to make ends meet at all, with a rent of

twenty shillings for each of his 130 acres. What a joy it is to look across those smiling fields and mark the change a century of continuous improvement has wrought — the rich pasture, in which great herds of speckled cows wander through luscious clover; the yellow crops of heavy-headed grain, the deep green fields of roots, and the massive ricks of hay already gathered in! Land is now too valuable to be allowed to lie under water, and the loch has been completely drained. To the delight of archæologists, there was discovered in it one of those curious crannogs which have been found here and there over Scotland. The most valuable of the articles laid bare were sent to the Dick Institute in Kilmarnock.

For four years life went on in the Burnes home much as it had done at Mount Oliphant. The work was hard; but the burden of care was lighter, and on the whole their lives were happy. They held aloof from their neighbours, who, truth to tell, looked on those poor, proud strangers with no very friendly eye. Robert's sarcastic tongue won him more respect than love. People resented his manner, and little wonder! He was becoming conscious of his own superiority, and it was his constant practice to measure himself against the men he met. Even after life in Irvine, and the meetings of the Bachelors' Club, and of the masonic lodge in Tarbolton had given him a certain polish, he was not free from this embarrassing habit. It disconcerted Dr Mackenzie when he first met him in 1783. "The poet," he says, "seemed distant, suspicious, and without any wish to interest or please. He kept

himself very silent in a dark corner of the room; and before he took any part in the conversation, I frequently detected him scrutinising me during my conversation with his father and brother." He loved an argument, especially on religious subjects. He was proud of his appearance, and somewhat of a dandy in his dress, wearing the only tied hair in the parish, and carrying his filemot plaid in a manner peculiar to himself.

"Though I canna ride in weel-booted pride,
And flee o'er the hills like a craw, man,
I can haud up my head wi' the best o' the breed,
Though fluttering ever so braw, man."

Withal Burns was of a sociable disposition. When he had measured his man and found him worthy, he was the truest of friends; and when he found himself in congenial society, he was the best of company. He was, by the end of 1780, well enough acquainted with his neighbours to form the Bachelors' Club, which met in the top flat of the second house on the right-hand side of the Sandgate, going from Tarbolton Cross. It was then a public-house, kept by one John Richard. The original members were seven, including Robert and Gilbert Burns, all country lads, for Robert had not yet become reconciled to the manners of the "self-sufficient mechanics" of the village. The rules of the club are well known. They are worth the perusal of the founders of debating societies to-day. Though the club met in a tavern, its business was debate on any subject that might be proposed, "disputed points of religion only excepted." The expenditure of each member was limited to threepence, which sum provided the wherewithal to drink "a general

toast to the mistresses of the Club" before the meeting broke up. It proved so great a success that new members sought admission, and the meetings were held weekly—instead of monthly, as had been at first intended. It was carried on long after Burns had left Tarbolton, and it has its successor in the Literary Society, which still meets in the village.

Among the new members admitted to the Bachelors' Club in 1781, was David Sillar, who soon became the poet's bosom friend. He was the son of the tenant of the small farm of Spittleside, about a mile from the village. Like Burns, he was fond of books. He was also a "brother-poet." Burns and Sillar spent much of their spare time together. They walked in the fields between sermons on Sundays, they frequently visited each other, and they went together to court the maids at Stair and Coilsfield. Burns's "Epistle to Davy, a Brother-Poet, Lover, Ploughman and Fiddler" first suggested to him the idea of becoming author, and it duly appeared in the Kilmarnock edition. Sillar's answer does not seem to have been written until Burns had gone to Edinburgh. It is so little known that we shall quote a few stanzas:

"While Reekie's bards your muse commen';
An' praise the numbers o' your pen,
Accept this kin'ly frae a frien',
Your Dainty Davie,
Wha ace o' hearts does still remain,
Ye may believe me.

. . . . . .

"Hail, happy Bard! ye 're now confest
The king o' singers i' the west:
Edina hath the same exprest;
Wi' joy they fin'
That ye 're, when tried by Nature's test,
Gude sterlin' coin.

"I ever had an anxious wish,
Forgive me, Heaven! if 'twas amiss,
That Fame in life my name would bless,
An' kin'ly save
It from the cruel tyrant's crush,
Beyond the grave.

. . . . . .

"Sae to conclude, auld frien' an' neebor,
Your muse forgetna weel to feed her,
Then steer through life wi' birr an' vigour
To win a horn,
Whose soun' shall reach ayont the Tiber
'Mang ears unborn."

Though Sillar was bred, like Burns, to "drudge and drive thro' wet and dry," he had an ambition to find some less laborious and more congenial occupation than that of farmer. He essayed the profession of schoolmaster. For a time he taught the parish school in Tarbolton, and he afterwards opened a small school in a neighbouring hamlet, but his success was limited. As he said (we can scarcely say sang), his equipment for his adopted profession was scanty:

"I ne'er depended for my knowledge
On school, academy, nor college:
I gat my learnin' at the flail,
An' some I catch'd at the plough-tail.
Amang the brutes I own I'm bred,
Since herding was my native trade."

Sillar next turned grocer in Irvine; but misfortune pursued him, and his experience of trade ended with his imprisonment for debt. Meantime the success of Burns had induced his "auld neebor" to follow his example, and in 1789 John Wilson published *Poems, by David Sillar.* The little volume did not gain the public favour; but on the strength of it Sillar went to Edinburgh in

search of literary work. His quest was vain, and as a last resource he returned to Irvine to become a coach in navigation. What knowledge he had of the subject it would be difficult to discover; but his school proved a financial success. The tide had turned. His elder brothers had made fortunes in African trade, and on their deaths David became a rich man. He spent the remainder of his days in Irvine, where he died in 1830.

Another Tarbolton rhymester deserves to be remembered, not for his doggerel, but for his connection with Burns. Saunders Tait was the bard of the village when Burns and Sillar moved about it. He was a tailor and a "character"; but he had some influence among the villagers, and he was raised to the dignity of Bailie of Tarbolton. This is his boast:

> "I'm Patron to the Burgher folks,
> I'm Cornal to the Farmers' Box,
> And Bailie to guid hearty cocks,
> That are a' grand—
> Has heaps o' houses built on rocks,
> Wi' lime and sand."

Not to be outdone by his rivals, Tait published a volume of poems in 1790, the only known copy of which is in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow. It is a literary curiosity, though one doubts the seriousness of a late Burns editor in his suggestion that it should be reprinted for the sake of its scurrilous attacks on Burns.

Opposite the churchyard and next door to the Crown Inn, there is a two-storeyed thatched house which is of interest to the Burns pilgrim. It was the house of John Wilson, schoolmaster and

session-clerk, the famous "Dr Hornbook." In the lower storey he kept a small shop, in which he sold groceries and simple drugs. His advertisement that "Advice would be given in common disorders at the shop, gratis," tickled the poet's fancy, and brought forth "Death and Dr Hornbook," which Burns is said to have composed on his way home to Mossgiel from a masonic meeting in 1785. Wilson was sensible enough to appear to enjoy the humour of the poem, and it was quite a mistake on Lockhart's part to state that he had to leave the village on account of the ridicule to which he was exposed after its appearance. It has been proved that he was session-clerk in 1793, and that the probable cause of his departure was a dispute with Dr Wodrow. Wilson taught a school in Glasgow for many years, and was session-clerk of a parish in that city until his death in 1839.

Burns was initiated into the mysteries of the masonic craft in Tarbolton on July 4, 1781. He travelled from Irvine to be passed and raised, and to the end he was an enthusiastic mason. His mother-lodge, St David's, was long defunct, but it has recently been re-constituted. Its old minute-book can still be seen in the Burns Tavern at the Cross. In Burns's time the masons met in Manson's Inn, which is now a dilapidated thatched cottage at the foot of Burns Street. It is rapidly becoming a total ruin, but one is glad to know that the masons of Tarbolton are negotiating with its proprietor to secure the preservation of this interesting memorial of Burns and Freemasonry. The lodge of St James, which was resuscitated by Burns and some other mem-

bers of St David's in 1782, is still in existence. Not long ago, a hall was built for its meetings, and there, in safe custody, are kept the precious relics of Burns as a Freemason—the chair, footstool, and mallet which he used as Depute Master, the jewels which he wore, a bible which he purchased, and the minute-book of the lodge, containing entries written by him, and his signature to many separate minutes. It reflects credit on the brethren of St James's lodge that money has not been able to purchase that valuable volume.

It is never forgotten that among the merry masons of Tarbolton Burns was introduced "to the life of a boon companion"; but it is not always remembered that he owed some of his warmest and dearest friends to his connection with the masonic craft. It was in the lodge at Tarbolton, or at Mauchline, that he came to know such men as Gavin Hamilton, Dr Mackenzie, Sheriff Wallace, Dalrymple of Orangefield, and Dugald Stewart, and through them he was afterwards introduced to the best of his Edinburgh patrons. Burns was not a mason for the sake of the boon companionship. He was enthusiastic in his devotion to the precepts of masonry. The effects of its teaching can be traced all through his verse, from the essential charity of the "Address to the Unco Guid" to the masonic petition:

"Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that;
That Sense and Worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree, and a' that;
For a' that, and a' that,
It's coming yet, for a' that,
That man to man, the world o'er,
Shall brithers be for a' that!"

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Gilbert Burns has put on record that while they lived at Lochlea, Robert was continually the victim of some fair enslaver. His tall, athletic frame, his haughty, swarthy countenance, lit by his dark, glowing eyes, his winning tongue and deferential manner, must have won him favour among the lasses of Tarbolton; but they had enough of worldly wisdom to deny the suit of one whose position in life was so little assured as the poet's was. He would fain have offered hand and heart to Annie Ronald, daughter of the Laird of Bennals, a small estate near Afton Lodge; but he feared a summary dismissal, and contented himself with celebrating his timid passion in a song:

"Yet I wadna choose to let her refuse,
Nor hae't in her power to say na, man;
For though I be poor, unnoticed, obscure,
My stomach's as proud as them a', man."

Around Lochlea there is ample evidence of the truth of Gilbert's statement. Barely a mile to the east is Littlehill, where lived Tibbie Steen, the heroine of

"O Tibbie, I hae seen the day,
Ye wouldna been sae shy;
For lack o' gear ye lightly me,
But, trowth, I care na by."

Two miles to the west is Adamhill, the home of Burns's friend, "rough, rude, ready-witted Rankine," whose daughter, Anne, claimed the honour of being the lass who saw him through the barley upon a certain "Lammas night, when corn rigs are bonnie." "Little did I think to see a sang on me in print," said Anne to Burns,

after the publication of his poems. "O ay, I was just wanting to give you a cast among the lave," said the poet. Anne was proud enough of the song to sing it years afterwards when she was the wife of an innkeeper in New Cumnock. It is not necessary to suppose that every heroine of these early songs was an actual sweetheart of the poet. He was the trusted confidant of half the lovers in the parish, and doubtless for many of them he wrote verses, of which only a few have come down to us. One of his companions declared that he "composed a song on every tolerable-looking lass in the parish, and, finally, one in which they were all included."

East of Lochlea the "Cessnock pours with gurgling sound." At the point where it is nearest the farm, the stream bends sharply to the north, and there, among the trees, is Cairnhill, the residence of that descendant of the Wallaces who wrote the tender lyric, "Strephon and Lydia." In his notes to Johnson's *Musical Museum*, Burns has told how the real Strephon and Lydia were the fairest couple of their time; how they loved each other dearly; how he was poor, and was therefore sent to perish in the disastrous attack on Carthagena.

> "Ill-fated youth! by fault of friend,
> Not force of foe depressed,
> Thou fall'st, alas! thyself, thy kind,
> Thy country unredressed."

On Cessnock banks there dwelt a lass who completely won her way to Burns's heart. Ellison Begbie was the daughter of a small farmer in the parish of Galston. Her services not being required at home, she was employed by a neighbouring farmer when Burns met her. Her

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education was superior to that of the ordinary country maid of the time; her person was pleasing, though she was not a beauty; and the imagination of the poet invested her with every estimable charm. He praised her "uncommon personal advantages," her "superior good sense," her "amiable goodness, tender, feminine softness, endearing sweetness of disposition, with all the charming offspring of a warm, feeling heart." He wrote her letters such as surely never before ploughman swain addressed to country maid. He sang her charms in verses such as these:

"She 's sweeter than the morning dawn,
When rising Phœbus first is seen,
And dew-drops twinkle o'er the lawn;
An' she has twa sparkling, rogueish een.
Her hair is like the curling mist
That climbs the mountain-sides at e'en,
When flow'r-reviving rains are past;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een."

Ellison committed his verses to memory—she repeated them to Cromek when she was an old lady in Glasgow—but she denied the poet's suit. Notwithstanding the change of name and the record of a tombstone which we shall find in Mauchline churchyard, it is almost certain that she inspired one of the most beautiful of all his love-songs, of which the last stanza is paraphrased in the last letter he sent her:

"O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
Wha for thy sake wad gladly die?
Or canst thou break that heart of his,
Whase only faut is loving thee?
If love for love thou wilt na gie,
At least be pity to me shown;
A thought ungentle canna be
The thought o' Mary Morison."

Lochlea saw the close of Burns's poetic apprenticeship. The date of the composition of "Mary Morison" is too much in doubt to justify any inference; but enough was certainly written at Lochlea to prove that the poet had grasped the methods of which he proved himself a perfect master at Mossgiel. "Poor Mailie," with its tenderness underlying its transparent humour, was an earnest of the masterpieces yet to come.

We need not linger over the last sad days at Lochlea—the quarrel with the landlord, the law-suit, the father's broken health. The grey light of a February morning stole through the little window of the "spence" at Lochlea, and fell coldly on the bed in which William Burnes lay dying. By his side his favourite daughter knelt, listening amid her tears to gentle words of farewell counsel. Suddenly the dying man raised his voice: "There's ane o' ye," he said, "for whom my heart is wae. I hope he may na fa'." The tall, stooping figure beside the window started and trembled. "O father," he said, "is it me you mean?" For an instant their eyes met in a full deep gaze. Then slowly the father's eyelids fell, and his head sank on his breast in affirmation. He spoke no more. Shaking with sobs, Robert Burns turned to the window. As he gazed through the dim panes on the dismal world, he vowed the vow, which he did try, although he tried in vain, to keep: "Father! father on earth and Father in heaven! I will be wise."

CHAPTER XI

MAUCHLINE AND MOSSGIEL

"All hail! my own inspirèd Bard!
In me thy native Muse regard!
Nor longer mourn thy fate is hard,
Thus poorly low!
I come to give thee such reward
As we bestow."

To the thoughtful pilgrim, the scenes of the struggles and achievements of the world's great men are infinitely more inspiring than the places of their birth and burial. It is inevitable that the memory of a great soldier should be bound up with the scene of his mightiest triumph. "Wellington and Waterloo," "Bruce and Bannockburn," trip instinctively together from the tongue. It is not different with great men of letters. In the study at Abbotsford, and not in the silent shades of Dryburgh—in a little room at Craigenputtock, and not in the graveyard at Ecclefechan—among the fields of Mossgiel, and not beneath the mausoleum at Dumfries—we must seek, if we would find the spirits of our greatest Scots.

In this sense Mossgiel is the heart of the Burns country. Strangely enough, it is almost the geographical centre. From the high ridge on which it stands, we survey a great part of the land of Burns. Westward, the Ayr steals through its wooded vale past Tarbolton and on to Ayr, which lies between us and the peaks of Arran, rising faint and blue in the far distance. To south and east, over Barskimming woods and the braes of Ballochmyle, the view includes the heights of Carrick and the distant hills of Cumnock, beyond which lie the "green braes" of Afton and the "banks of winding Nith." To the north, the Cessnock flows between us and the bleak Galston Moors, and we get a glimpse of the valley through which the "well-fed Irwine stately thuds." The country is more beautiful than it was in Burns's day—the woods are richer, and the braes are greener;—but the sense of freedom in the wide and varied prospect was the same a century ago as it is to-day, and it had its effect on Robert Burns. It had doubtless something to do with the wonderful fertility of the years he spent at Mossgiel. At Mount Oliphant and at Lochlea he had been preparing, actively, consciously preparing, to be his country's bard; and it was fortunate that, just when his apprenticeship was coming to a close, he removed from Lochlea to the invigorating, inspiring environment of Mossgiel.

That was in March 1784. For some months thereafter his health was indifferent. His whole energy was expended on his farm work. He was reading farming books, calculating crops, and attending markets—endeavouring to make good

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the resolution, "I will be wise." His amazing outburst of song began in April 1785, when he wrote the "Epistle to Lapraik." From that time until the appearance of the Kilmarnock edition in July 1786, his inspiration was at its height. As he "walked in glory and in joy, following his plough, along the mountain side," he poured forth a flood of song as naturally and almost as easily as sang the lark "when upward springing, blythe, to greet the purpling East." There is no need to detail the issues of these months—the biting satires, the epistles, full of fun and wisdom, the idyls of the cotter's life, and all the tender songs of nature and of love. Nothing proves the white-heat of his inspiration more than the simple fact that such a masterpiece as "The Jolly Beggars" was a trivial amusement fired off to delight a friend, and then thrown aside and forgotten. Our sympathy with the failure and misfortunes of Burns as a farmer is mixed with a selfish joy that the "bitter blaudin' showers" that "cowpit the stooks" and ruined the crop of 1785 drove him to "dedicate the hour in idle rhyme" to poesy.

Mossgiel stands about a mile from the village of Mauchline, above the road to Tarbolton. Wordsworth has described its situation in a well-known sonnet:

"'There!' said a stripling, pointing with meet pride
Towards a low roof with green trees half concealed,
'Is Mossgiel farm; and that's the very field
Where Burns ploughed up the Daisy.' Far and wide
A plain below stretched seaward, while, descried
Above sea-clouds, the Peaks of Arran rose;
And, by that simple notice, the repose
Of earth, sky, sea, and air, was vivified.

Beneath 'the random bield of clod or stone'
Myriads of Daisies have shone forth in flower
Near the lark's nest, and in their natural hour
Have passed away less happy than the One
That by the unwilling ploughshare died to prove
The tender charm of Poetry and of Love."

Portions of the walls of the old house may be incorporated in the present, comfortable-looking, two-storey building; the tall hedge in front may have been planted by Robert and Gilbert Burns; but the whole farm-stead has been altered since the Burnses took up residence there. The house was then a one-storeyed thatched cottage. It had been built as a summer home for the family of Gavin Hamilton, and it was therefore somewhat better equipped than the ordinary farmhouse of the time. There were the usual "but-and-ben"—the kitchen, which formed the common room of masters and servants alike, and the parlour or "spence," in which the vision of Coila appeared, to cheer the despondent bard. A trap-stair led to a garret divided into three small apartments, the middle one of which was the bedroom of the brothers Robert and Gilbert. The poet used to keep his papers in the drawer of a small table that stood under the skylight, and often when he was engaged on the farm his sister Isobel climbed the ladder to have a stolen glance at the treasures this drawer contained.

Within sight of the farm, on the triangle formed by the junction of the Tarbolton and Kilmarnock roads, there has been erected the most interesting of all the monuments to Robert Burns. To the Glasgow Mauchline Society is due the credit of the erection of this memorial,

GAVIN HAMILTON'S HOUSE, MAUCHLINE. *Page* 149.

which is "not a mere monument of stone and lime, but a memorial which will aid in a practical and permanent way those whose lot touched so keenly the sympathies of the poet." Behind a square baronial tower, which is utilised as a Burns Museum, there are several tastefully-designed cottages, in which deserving old people are offered a free home. The National Burns Memorial and Cottage Homes were formally opened on May 7, 1898, by Mr J. G. A. Baird, M.P., who congratulated the Glasgow Mauchline Society on having erected a memorial to Burns differing in one respect from all others with which he was acquainted. "This is the first attempt, so far as I know, to connect the memory of the poet with that burden which he had to bear all his life in a greater or less degree, and which called forth the sympathy with the poor expressed in many of his verses. Poverty was his companion through life. It was a happy thought of the Mauchline Society to include some provision for the aged poor in their plan for honouring the memory of Robert Burns."

Mauchline is a place of considerable antiquity. Tradition speaks of a battle which was fought in its neighbourhood in the seventh century. The history of the village begins in 1165, when Walter, the High Steward of Scotland, to whom the whole of "Stewart-Kyle" belonged, granted the lands of Mauchline to the monks of Melrose. It is generally believed that the monks planted a colony of their own order at Mauchline, and thus formed the nucleus of the village. It is, at any rate, quite certain that they built a church there. The only remaining mark of their pro-

prietorship is the interesting ruin known as Mauchline Castle, which was probably the residence of the land-steward.

The people of Mauchline took an active part in the struggle for Church reform. Wishart was invited to preach in the village church, but was debarred from entering. Some of his friends, such as Hew Campbell of Kinzeancleuch, would fain have effected an entrance by force, but Wishart "withdrew the said Hew, and said unto him, 'Brother, Christ Jesus is as potent in the fields as in the kirk.'" Therefore he conducted the first conventicle on Mauchline Moor. There were no more ardent reformers than the Campbells of Kinzeancleuch. Knox preached in the old castle, the roofless ruins of which stand in front of the modern mansion, about a mile from the village. Robert Campbell, Knox's friend, was foremost in the attack on Popery. His deeds were recounted in a quaint and interesting poem, written by the Regent of St Leonard's in 1595:

> "To tell his freinds he na whit dred,
> How they had lang been blindlins led
> By shaveling Papists, Monks, and Freers,
> And be the Paipe these many years;
> And in exhorting was not slak,
> That consultation they would tak,
> How orderlie they might suppresse,
> In thair owne bounds that Idole messe."

Mauchline Moor was the scene of an encounter in 1648. The Scottish Parliament had decided to raise an army in defence of Charles I. The Church and the majority of the people were opposed to any interference on his behalf unless

he signed the Covenant. Armed resistance to the Parliament was contemplated. At this juncture a great Communion service was held at Mauchline. Some two thousand people were present, and no fewer than seven ministers officiated. Next day a considerable company of armed men assembled on the moor outside the village. Whatever plans they had in view were frustrated by the appearance of a troop of horsemen under General Middleton. A show of resistance was made by some deserters from the army who were with the country people, and several were killed on both sides. Many prisoners were taken by Middleton's troops. They were conveyed to Ayr for trial. The country people were pardoned, and even the leaders, after having been condemned to be hanged or shot, were allowed to depart in a few days.

In May 1685, Mauchline witnessed a typical instance of the deeds of that cruel year. A company of soldiers marched to the village with five prisoners, men whom they had found reading bibles. After a form of trial, these were condemned to death, and forthwith they were hanged. Their bodies were thrown together into a hole dug beneath the gallows. The site of their grave was long marked by a flat stone, bearing their names and the following account of their martyrdom:

"Bloody Dumbarton, Douglas, and Dundee,
Moved by the Devil and the Laird of Lee,
Dragged these five men to death with gun and sword,
Not suffering them to pray nor read God's word;
Owning the word of God was all their crime.
The eighty-five was a saint-killing time."

The monument on the village green was erected in 1885 in memory of the Mauchline martyrs.

To-day Mauchline is a beautifully-situated, well-kept, thriving village of quarrymen and boxmakers, worthy of a visit for its own sake. Its chief interests, however, are those of other days. They are all concerned with Robert Burns. New streets have been made, and some of the old landmarks have been removed since his time; but Mauchline is still rich in the possession of places associated with the poet and his works. The pre-Reformation barn-like church in which he sat, a building of which Hew Ainslie said that it was "as ugly an old lump of consecrated stone as ever cumbered the earth," was removed in 1827, and on its site the existing plain but serviceable edifice was erected. The churchyard around it is for ever famous as the scene of the "Holy Fair," the apparent profanity of which has shocked even honest admirers of the poet. They forget that the profanation lay in the scenes which the poet describes with almost perfect accuracy. There doubtless were some good, earnest people, thick of skin and dull of feeling, among the fourteen hundred who celebrated Communion in Mauchline Church in 1786; but there were many more whose celebration of that sacred rite was a scandal and a mockery. On the authority of an eye-witness, Dr Edgar of Mauchline, in his *Old Church Life in Scotland*, tells how at Craigie Sacrament a "batch o' wabster lads blackguarding frae Kilmarnock," in passing from the public-house through the churchyard when the solemnities were proceeding, pitched, with drunken jeers, the remains of their

luncheon at the preacher in the tent. Enter Mauchline churchyard, and try to recall the scene as it actually was. On the right stood the "preaching tent": not a shelter for the hearers, but a rude kind of pulpit, from which one minister after another thundered forth his exhortations. Around it some hundreds of people sat on chairs, benches, gravestones; but there was continual coming and going. On the left were pitched the refreshment tents, crowded with people eating and drinking, the rattling of "caups" mingling strangely with the sound of the preacher's voice. Three adjacent public-houses, two of them entering from the churchyard and one just across the road, drove a roaring trade, and sent forth groups of hilarious strangers, whose scant respect for the place or the day had vanished with the liquor they had swallowed. For nine hours this went on, while successive relays of communicants went to and from the tables in the church. What wonder is it that sometimes there were scenes such as would have disgraced a horse fair of the olden time? All who reverence religious rites should be grateful for the share, however small, that the satire of Burns had in checking such abuses.

Many whom Burns's verse has rendered famous, sleep in the churchyard. Near the south entrance to the church there is a railed enclosure, within which, marked by no stone or monument, is the grave of Gavin Hamilton. "Holy Willie's sair-worn clay" has taken up "its last abode" under a flat stone near at hand. A few paces off, a simple monument has been erected in memory of Adj. John Morrison;

"Also his daughter, Mary,
The Poet's bonnie Mary Morrison,
Who died 29th June 1791, aged 20."

As the poet wrote "Mary Morison" some time between 1780 and 1784, there are obvious objections to the inscription. The remains of "Poosie Nansie" and "Racer Jess" repose together in a corner of the churchyard. In another is the memorial stone of "Daddy Auld," and close by it the grave of John Richmond, with whom Burns lodged in Edinburgh. Behind the church is the burial-place of the Alexanders of Ballochmyle; though the "bonnie lass" of whom Burns sang is not buried there. Within the enclosure there is a grey stone, in which is inserted a marble slab, with the inscription:

"Here lies the body of
JAMES WHITEFOORD,
son of
SIR JOHN WHITEFOORD,
Baronet,
Who died September 18th, 1773,
Aged one year.
"He was the brother of Maria,
Who sang through faded groves;
And to whom the wild wood's echoes rang—
Farewell the braes of Ballochmyle."

One other grave demands our notice. There, within the enclosure which belonged to the Armours, the children of the poet sleep. Old "Sandy" Marshall had a tale to tell of many another Mauchline worthy, as he led the visitor from stone to stone in the old churchyard. Now that he has gone the way of all the earth, some successor of his has probably inherited the legends.

Mauchline teems with memories of the poet. Opposite the churchyard gate, at the corner of the Cowgate, stands "Poosie Nansie's Hostelry," a much more respectable establishment than was that in which

> "Ae night, at e'en, a merry core,
> O' randie, gangrel bodies,
> In Poosie Nansie's held the splore,
> To drink their orra duddies."

Then it was a common lodging-house, kept by George Gibson and his wife, and frequented by the most degraded wretches in the country-side: the last place on earth in which one would expect a poet to find subjects for his muse. The principal inn of the village stood on the opposite side of the Cowgate, which was then a main thoroughfare. Its site is now occupied by a store, which a local poetaster, with more unconscious humour than truthfulness, has called

> "The house, though built anew,
> Where Burns cam' weary frae the plough,
> To hae a crack wi' Johnnie Dow
> O' nights, at e'en;
> And whiles to taste his mountain dew
> Wi' bonnie Jean."

Immediately behind the public-house of "Johnnie Pigeon," as Burns calls him, was the house of the Armours. Only a narrow lane separated the two buildings. Burns was no favourite with old Armour. The story goes that Jean and the poet used to communicate with one another from windows on opposite sides of the lane, thus arranging their stolen meetings. Jean's father was a man of some consequence in the village, a master-mason and contractor. He was a strict "Auld

Licht," and "would raither hae seen the deil himsel' comin' to the hoose to coort his dochter than Burns." The poet first met Jean in Hugh Morton's ballroom, which occupied the second flat of a public-house next door to Mauchline Castle. Burns's dog persisted in following him through the dance, and led him to say in Jean's hearing, "I wish I could get a lass to like me as well as my dog." A few days afterwards, as Jean was spreading clothes to bleach on the green, the poet passed with his faithful dog. Her roguish question, "Hae ye got ony lassie to like ye as weel as your dog yet?" brought Burns to a stand, and their love-story was begun. The single apartment in which they "set up house" as man and wife is little changed since then. The outer wall bears a tablet recently inserted by the Rosebery Burns Club. The old lady who occupies the room now feelingly laments that any inspiration which it may have had is gone for ever. "I hae sleepit in the poet's bed for seventeen year," she says, "an' I hae na made a sang yet."

On the opposite side of the narrow street stands what was once the "Sma' Inn" of Nanse Tinnock, in which the poet promised to drink Pitt's health "nine times a-week," though Nanse declared that he was not more than once or twice in her house in the course of his life.

Gavin Hamilton's house, now obscured by a church hall, adjoins the castle. There Burns spent some of his happiest hours. He had the warmest admiration for Hamilton,

> "The poor man's friend in need,
> The gentleman in word and deed."

POOSIE NANSIE'S. *Page* 151.

His pen was freely at Hamilton's service in his quarrel with the kirk-session, who charged him with neglect of his religious duties and with such flagrant misdemeanours as giving orders for a dish of new potatoes, to be dug on a Sunday forenoon. "Daddy" Auld was a conscientious, zealous minister, and one cannot doubt that it vexed him sorely to see the leading man in the village set an example of indifference to the ordinances of the Church. He therefore dealt much more rigorously with Hamilton than he dealt with Burns himself, when he came under the ban of the Church for a more serious offence. In spite of his somewhat narrow mind and strong self-will, Auld had a kind heart. He looked carefully after the interests of the poor, and he was exceedingly well liked by the great majority of his parishioners.

Burns had a wonderful power of adapting himself. His speech, his manner, even his countenance, changed with his company and circumstances. He was one man when with Richmond and Smith, "the slee'st pawkie thief, that e'er attempted stealth or rief," he went to enjoy the wild carousals of the "gangrel bodies" in Poosie Nansie's. He was another when he discussed social questions with his friend Dr Mackenzie, or did business with Gavin Hamilton. He was another still when he "presided o'er the sons of light" in the masonic lodge. It was one man who bantered the "Mauchline Belles"; it was another whose passion drove prudence from the mind of Jean Armour; and it was yet another who engaged in witty combats with Miss Kennedy, the "Young Peggy" who "blooms our bonniest

lass," whose ill-starred lot is said to have inspired "Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon." It is in Mauchline that we see Burns best in all his moods. There he comes in the gloaming, swinging down the hill from Mossgiel with jaunty step and head erect, ready with a merry joke or well-turned compliment for every lass he meets. We see him of a winter night seated in the "Whitefoord Arms," keeping the table in a roar with witty quips and sallies. He is unsparing in his criticism. The self-sufficient priest; the sanctimonious elder; the henpecked squire of Netherplace; the village dominie; the landlord himself; Humphrey, the "noisy polemic"; even "wee Johnnie," the humble cow-feeder; and the village lads, skulking from the law for their rough justice, to the "towsie drab"—all these come under his lash. Again we see him stalking through the village street, his hat drawn over his black brows, knitted in defiance of the "kintra clatter," the victim of remorse and disappointment, with the doom of exile staring him in the face. There once again we see him in all the pride of his Edinburgh fame. Last of all, he comes riding down the Cowgate; leaps off at the "Whitefoord Arms"; throws the reins to the stable-boy in the lordly way he has learned in his travels. Now he bounds across the vacant ground behind Nanse Tinnock's, his eye on a tiny window in the upper storey of the corner house; and as he rushes up the wooden stair his song rings out:

> "For there the bonnie lassie lives,
> The lassie I lo'e best."

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CHAPTER XII

THE BRAES OF BALLOCHMYLE

"Now blooms the lily by the bank,
The primrose down the brae;
The hawthorn's budding in the glen,
And milk-white is the slae."

Burns had many favourite haunts on the Ayr in the neighhourhood of Mauchline. One of these was Barskimming, where the river flows between bold cliffs of dull red sandstone, brightened by green patches springing from the crevices. From the bridge which spans the stream at a height of nearly a hundred feet, the view is delightful. Luxuriant woods overhang the steep banks, and relieve the ruggedness of the massive cliffs, in which there have been cut a series of caves that can be reached from the paths skirting the stream. The grounds owe much of their beauty to the taste of Sir Thomas Miller, Lord President of the Court of Session, proprietor in Burns's day, whose benevolence won the poet's praise in "The Vision."

"Thro' many a wild, romantic grove,
Near many a hermit-fancied cove,
(Fit haunts for Friendship or for Love
In musing mood)
An aged Judge, I saw him rove,
Dispensing good."

The original possessors of Barskimming were the Reids, one of whom was that Adam Reid who, along with the wife of Dalrymple of Stair and other Lollards, was summoned by Bishop Blackadder to answer before the king (James IV.) to a charge of heresy. Reid was the spokesman of the party, and by his ready wit and bold answers so discomfited his accusers that, as Knox said, "the bischop and his band was so dashed out of countenance that the greatest part of the accusations was turned to lawchter." Though this happened twenty-three years before Luther nailed his famous theses to the door of the church at Wittenberg, the Lollards of Kyle were no more molested until, in 1539, young Thomas Kennedy, the first of Ayrshire's martyrs, was burned in Glasgow.

An interesting tale has often been told in connection with Burns's visits to Barskimming. At the end of the bridge which crosses the Ayr below Barskimming mill, there is a cottage in which an old man named Kemp lived with his daughter Kate. Kate was a trim lass, whose charms brought Burns from Mossgiel to see her one evening. It happened that Kemp's cow had strayed, and Kate had gone to look for it. The poet set off to search for both. As he crossed the bridge he met the miller of Barskimming on his way to visit Kate. "Well, miller, what are you doing here?" said he. "'Deed," said the miller, "I was gaun to spier that question at you." "Why," said the poet, "I cam' doun to see Kate Kemp." "I was just gaun the same gate," said the miller. "Then, ye need gang nae

farther," said Burns, "for baith her and the coo 's lost, and the auld man is perfectly wild at the want o' them." The rivals strolled together by the river side, chatting in friendly fashion. Soon, however, Burns became silent, and strode along in a pensive mood. Suddenly he turned, bade the miller good-night, and hurried off towards Mauchline. Next time he met the miller, he apologised for his rudeness, and explained that he had been composing a poem. To make amends, he read his composition to the miller. It was "Man was made to Mourn." It is idle to inquire on what foundation the story rests ; but it is worth repeating, if only as an illustration of the popular estimate of Burns's extraordinary genius. He did not labour at his compositions. They were the fruits of a moment's inspiration. Was not "Tam o' Shanter" written in a day? Needless to say, that is not according to Burns's own repeated statements. He composed easily, and corrected laboriously.

Though Catrine has been a manufacturing village for a century, it has only recently been reached by the railway. The walk from Mauchline is delightful, whether one goes by way of Ballochmyle or takes the longer way by Howford Bridge and Catrine House, with a look-in at the famous viaduct by which the railway is carried over the Ayr. Catrine is the offspring of the river. Before the beginning of last century cotton-works were established there, though bleaching is now the chief industry of the village. The motive power is supplied by the stream which drives the enormous wheels of Catrine, each of which is fifty feet in diameter, and provided with buckets which

carry round something over one hundred tons of water every minute.

Happily, the village has preserved its attractive appearance in spite of its public works. With the braes of Ballochmyle on one hand, the woods of Catrine on the other, and the river flowing through its streets, it can still claim with justice to be the queen of Ayrshire villages. It is natural that beautiful and busy Catrine should have brought forth a host of local bards. None of them has risen above mediocrity; though on every Scottish village platform the songs of Hamilton Nimmo used to be first favourites, and Crawford's "Drunkard's Raggit Wean," written before there was any teetotal party, won a place in public favour which a more pretentious work could not have filled.

"He stans at ilka door, an' he keeks wi' wistful e'e,
To see the crowd aroun' the fire a' laughin' loud wi' glee;
But he daurna venture ben, though his heart be e'er sae fain,
For he maunna play wi' ither bairns, the drunkard's raggit wean."

Catrine has other memories for the Burns student. It was of a meeting in a whitewashed farmhouse on the outskirts of the village, that Burns wrote:

"This wot ye all whom it concerns,
I Rhymer Robin, alias Burns,
October twenty-third,
A ne'er to be forgotten day,
Sae far I sprachled up the brae,
I dinner'd wi' a Lord."

This farmhouse, and not the present Catrine House, which was not built until the cotton-

RIVER AYR AT BARSKIMMING. *Page* 156.

works had been established, was the residence of the Stewarts; "simple Catrine, their long-lov'd abode," whence "Learning and Worth in equal measures trode." Dugald Stewart came to know Burns through Dr Mackenzie, and he has left an account of their first meeting. "His manners were then," he says, "as they continued ever afterwards, simple, manly, and independent; strongly expressive of conscious genius and worth, but without anything that indicated forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. He took his share in conversation, but not more than belonged to him; and listened with apparent attention and deference on subjects where his want of education deprived him of the means of information. If there had been a little more of gentleness and accommodation in his temper, he would, I think, have been still more interesting; but he had been accustomed to give law in the circle of his ordinary acquaintance, and his dread of anything approaching to meanness or servility rendered his manner somewhat decided and hard."

Stewart and Burns met often afterwards, at masonic meetings in Mauchline, in morning walks, and at evening parties in Edinburgh. There was much in common between the cultured, eloquent professor and the equally eloquent though less polished farmer. Burns has left his judgment of his friend in prose as well as in verse. "The most perfect character I ever saw is Mr Stewart. An exalted judge of the human heart, and of composition. Wealth, honours, all that is extraneous of the man, have no more influence with him than they will have at the Last Day. His wit, in the hour of social

hilarity, proceeds almost to good-natured waggishness, and in telling a story he particularly excels." Dugald Stewart was born in 1753. When only nineteen years of age he conducted his father's classes in mathematics at Edinburgh University, and in 1785 he was appointed to the Chair of Moral Philosophy. He was the most famous teacher of his time. "Had he lived in ancient times," says Lord Cockburn, "his memory would have descended to us as that of one of the finest of the old eloquent sages." To discuss his influence on philosophy, and the excellence of his many works, is not within our province.

The recently published letters of Mrs Dunlop give an account of another interesting meeting at Catrine. In 1790 Dugald Stewart married Helen d'Arcy Cranstoun, to whom Mrs Dunlop addressed a simple poem, "My Fair Euphrosine." Mrs Dunlop left her widowed daughter at Loudoun Castle to visit the new-married pair at Catrine. She sent Burns this account of her visit. "I will freely tell you I had an errand besides my fondness for the lady, and that second-hand esteem which you, perhaps, more than any one else, had inspired me with for the gentleman, which made me haste to Catrine, and I was not disappointed. Mr Stewart even anticipated all I could have wished. I was a stranger; so was my servant; the roads were intricately crost and perplext. We asked the way to Bullockmill (Ballochmyle); they answered carelessly, 'Hold up the brae.' I then asked the way to Catrine. Every one I spoke to run a little way on to shew it, and seemed perfectly in earnest that we

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should not mistake. I cannot tell you how much this trifle pleased me, but when I arrived I was really delighted. I never saw more modest, gentle, mild manners in a man. I don't believe but I like him better already than you did your Matthew, spite of all the beautiful flowers you have gathered for his grave, or the variety of birds you invoke to sing his requiem." Mrs Stewart is remembered for her poetical gifts. Burns added four lines to her song, "The Tears I shed must ever fall," and sent it to *Johnson's Museum*, in which work another poem is ascribed to her:

"Returning spring with gladsome ray,
Adorns the earth and smoothes the deep:
All nature smiles, serene and gay,
It smiles, and yet, alas! I weep.
The glowing tints of Fancy fade,
Life's distant prospects charm no more;
Alas! are all my hopes betray'd?
Can nought my happiness restore?"

The far-famed "braes of Ballochmyle" are easily reached (if one be armed with a permit), from Catrine village. Entering the grounds at a lodge at the end of the village, the visitor has to climb the steep "Jacob's ladder," which leads to the summit of the banks. A path to the left curves along the river-side. At one time the stream flows at the base of perpendicular cliffs; at another it is hidden by a dense mass of luxuriant foliage. It would be a place to rouse a poet's ardour, even if it had not been already consecrated to poesy. This power of the poet to consecrate is passing strange. Here is a scene which nature and art have combined to make of the rarest

beauty. We admire its loveliness; but our thoughts are with the poet. Over there is a magnificent mansion in which men and women known to fame have lived and died, but we pass it by and look for a simple heather-house, which marks the spot where a poet sang his song. In a letter which he sent to Miss Alexander, craving her permission to publish the poem which she had inspired, Burns thus described his meeting with "the lass o' Ballochmyle." "The evening sun was flaming o'er the distant, western hills; not a breath stirred the crimson, opening blossom, or the verdant, spreading leaf. 'Twas a golden moment for a poetic heart. I listened to the feathered warblers, pouring their harmony on every hand, with a congenial, kindred regard. Such was the scene, and such the hour, when, in a corner of my prospect, I spied one of the fairest pieces of nature's workmanship that ever crowned a poetic landscape or blest a poet's eye, those visionary bards excepted, who hold commerce with aërial beings! What an hour of inspiration for a poet! It would have raised plain, dull, historic prose to metaphor and measure."

The story of Miss Alexander's neglect of the poet's letter is well known. That it did not proceed from lack of appreciation of the beauty of the compliment the poet paid her, was shown by the care with which she guarded the manuscript until her death in 1843, and by the erection of a simple memorial to indicate the place at which she met the poet. These verses of the poem hang on the walls of the little summer-house that marks the spot.

"'Twas even, the dewy fields were green,
On every blade the pearls hang;
The zephyr wanton'd round the bean,
And bore its fragrant sweets alang:
In every glen the mavis sang,
All Nature listening seem'd the while;
Except where greenwood echoes rang,
Amang the braes o' Ballochmyle.

"With careless step I onward stray'd,
My heart rejoic'd in Nature's joy,
When, musing in a lonely glade,
A maiden fair I chanc'd to spy;
Her look was like the morning's eye,
Her air like Nature's vernal smile,
Perfection whisper'd passing by,
'Behold the lass o' Ballochmyle!'"

Like Barskimming, Ballochmyle originally belonged to the Reids, who were at one time a powerful clan in Kyle. As we have seen, a Reid was a leader among the Lollards. Another Reid headed the party which prevented Wishart from preaching in the church of Mauchline. John Reid of Ballochmyle was a noted persecutor, and was concerned with the Laird of Culzean in the murder of Gilbert M'Adam, whose grave lies in Kirkmichael churchyard.

About the middle of the eighteenth century the lands of Ballochmyle were acquired by Allan Whitefoord, scion of an ancient Renfrewshire family. He was probably that Allan Whitefoord (taken prisoner by the followers of Prince Charlie at Prestonpans) whose adventures appear in *Waverley* as those of Colonel Talbot. Allan Whitefoord was succeeded in the lands of Ballochmyle by his nephew, Sir John, one of Burns's earliest patrons. Sir John was master

of St James's masonic lodge, and he warmly defended the character of his brother mason, the poet, when it was assailed shortly after his first visit to Edinburgh. His acknowledgment of Burns's letter of thanks must have still more deeply touched the heart of the poet. He wrote, "Your character as a man (forgive my reversing the order), as well as a poet, entitle you, I think, to the assistance of every inhabitant of Ayrshire." The failure of the Douglas and Heron Bank forced Sir John to sell the estate of Ballochmyle. With heavy hearts his family left their beautiful home on the banks of Ayr. Burns expressed his sympathy in the tender "Farewell to Ballochmyle":

"The Catrine woods were yellow seen,
The flowers decay'd on Catrine lee,
Nae lav'rock sang on hillock green,
But nature sicken'd on the e'e.
Thro' faded groves Maria sang,
Hersel' in beauty's bloom the while;
And aye the wild-wood echoes rang,
'Fareweel the braes o' Ballochmyle.'"

Ingratitude was never one of Burns's failings. Years afterwards, when Sir John Whitefoord's patronage could no longer avail him anything, he sent him a copy of his heart-felt "Lament for Glencairn," with these lines:

"Thou, who thy honour as thy God rever'st,
Who, save thy mind's reproach, nought earthly fear'st,
To thee this votive offering I impart,
The tearful tribute of a broken heart.
The *Friend* thou valued'st, I the *Patron* lov'd;
His worth, his honour, all the world approved.
We'll mourn till we, too, go as he has gone,
And tread the shadowy path to that dark world unknown."

It is but two miles from Catrine to the picturesque village of Sorn, the birthplace of Joseph Train, to whose research Sir Walter Scott was indebted for many curious traditions which he cunningly wove into his immortal works. Train was but a child when his parents removed to Ayr. While he was an excise officer in Galloway, he devoted himself to antiquarian research. The first fruit of this was a volume of verse, *Strains of the Mountain Muse*, which he published in 1814. His ballads were good; the explanatory notes were excellent; and Sir Walter Scott, ever on the watch for genuine merit, sent the author his warm commendations. That was the beginning of a long correspondence. It is altogether to the honour of Train that he sacrificed his own ambition to contribute his small share to the work of one whom he instantly recognised to be an unapproachable master. The notes to *Redgauntlet*, *The Lord of the Isles*, *Guy Mannering*, and *Old Mortality* show with what zeal he ferreted out all kinds of information for their gifted author.

Close by the village the old Castle of Sorn stands, on the banks of the river. Its memories go back to the days when James V. visited it, and was so ill-pleased with Ayrshire roads that he said he would send the next man against whom he had a grudge to attend a marriage at Sorn. Charles II. stationed a garrison in the castle to overawe the Presbyterians. Peden is said to have frequented a cave in its neighbourhood; but the best local tradition points to a cave on the Lugar near Auchinleck, as the last hiding-place of the prophet.

Though Burns had few direct associations with the Ayr above Catrine, "from Glenbuck to the Ratton Key," it was all his stream. He knew every rushing brook that swells its volume from "haunted Garpal" to the "brawling Coil." Upward through the bleak moorland past Muirkirk and into Douglasdale, he rode on a gloomy November day in 1786, astride a borrowed pony, on his way to Edinburgh. Muirkirk was the home of his friend, "honest-hearted auld Lapraik," and all around the sources of the Ayr is martyr land, to which we cannot doubt his fancy often roved, although, patriot as he was, and descendant (as he claimed to be) of one of those who fell at Airds Moss, it did not wake his muse.

Near where a tiny feeder of the Lugar springs from its mossy bed, loving hands have reared a monument upon the grave of Richard Cameron. Around it lies the dreary waste of Airds Moss, a region of moss-hags and heather, far from the haunts of men. Only the shrill cry of the plover and the plaintive call of the curlew break the silence of its solitude. Through those desolate wilds Cameron and the men who had taken part with him in the Sanquhar Declaration (June 1680) wandered for a month, with a price upon their heads. At last their hiding-place was betrayed. A force was sent to capture them. Hackston of Rathillet drew up the little band of hillmen on a green knoll that rose from the treacherous moss, and awaited the attack. To yield was death, and the heather was a softer bed than the gallows-foot. They uttered no battle-cry. Only Cameron's prayer, "Lord, spare the green, and

take the ripe," rang out thrice as the soldiers drew near. They fought the resolute fight of despair. Cameron and eight of his companions fell. Hackston was less fortunate. Sorely wounded, he was taken to Edinburgh, there to meet a barbarous death. To this day the shepherd in his rounds bares his head as he stands on Cameron's grave. He sees Peden kneeling there, tired of his wanderings, praying, "O, to be wi' Ritchie"; and he repeats the words of a shepherd boy who tended his flocks among those lonely moors, the words of Hislop's "Cameronian's Dream":

"In a dream of the night, I was wafted away
To the muirlands of mist where the martyrs lay;
Where Cameron's sword and his Bible were seen
Engraved on the stone where the heather grows green.

"'Twas a dream of those ages of darkness and blood,
When the minister's home was the mountain and wood,
And in Wellwood's dark valley the standard of Zion,
All bloody and torn, 'mong the heather was lying.

"The muskets were flashing, the blue swords were gleaming,
The helmets were cleft, and the red blood was streaming,
The heavens grew black, and the thunder was rolling,
As in Wellwood's dark muirlands the mighty were falling."

There is little to attract the visitor to the village of Muirkirk apart from the graves of the martyrs in its churchyard. There, too, lies the dust of John Lapraik, who ended his days as postmaster of the little town, which then was growing rapidly in consequence of the establishment of ironworks. Lapraik was probably connected with the ancient family of Lekprevick or Lapraik of that ilk, of which was Lekprevick, printer to His Majesty James the Sixth of

Scotland. He lived secure in his lairdship of Dalfram until the failure of the Ayrshire bank, and then he fell on times so evil that he was imprisoned in Ayr jail for debt. There he is said to have composed the song:

"When I upon thy bosom lean,
Enraptured I do call thee mine;
I glory in those sacred ties
That made us one who once were twain;
A mutual flame inspires us both—
The tender look, the melting kiss;
Even years shall ne'er destroy our love—
Some sweet sensation new will rise"

—the song "that some kind husband had addrest to some sweet wife," which led Burns to correspond with its author, and so to bestow on him a measure of fame. It was inevitable that Lapraik should follow in the footsteps of Burns, and issue a volume from the Kilmarnock press. It was but sorry stuff, and did not even contain his answers to Burns's epistles; though it has an address to Burns, owning that the author had no thought to give the world his "dull, insipid, thowless rhyme,"

"Till your kind muse, wi' friendly blast,
First tooted up my fame,
And sounded loud thro' a' the wast,
My lang-forgotten name."

Among the lonely hills above Muirkirk a monument marks the spot where John Brown of Priesthill, "the Christian Carrier," met his cruel death. Now there is scarcely a vestige of his humble cottage, in which men like Renwick and Peden found shelter in their wanderings. At its

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door was done that deed the memory of which, more than all else, has stained the name of Claverhouse. The story has been often told. This is the substance of Wodrow's graphic, if somewhat highly-coloured version of it. The mists hung heavy on the hills. Brown and his nephew, engaged in cutting peats, suddenly found themselves surrounded by a troop of horse. To sharp questions the carrier rendered back unflinching answers. Then came the command, "Go to your prayers, for you shall immediately die." In front of his own house, in sight of his wife and children, with his executioners around him, Brown knelt down and prayed for those who were so soon to be widowed and fatherless. When his petitions were ended, he said farewell to his family and turned to meet his fate. Six bullets pierced his head. "What thinkest thou of thy husband now, woman?" said the merciless Claverhouse. "I thought ever much good of him," she said, "and as much now as ever." "It were but justice," said he, "to lay thee beside him." "If ye were permitted," was her answer, "I doubt not but your cruelty would go that length; but how will ye make answer for this morning's work?" There was no remorse in his reply. "To man I can be answerable, and, for God, I will take Him in my own hands." An acrostic was inscribed on the flat stone which was laid on John Brown's grave:

"In death's cold bed the dusty part here lies
Of one who did the earth as dust despise;
Here in this spot from earth he took departure,
Now he hath got the garland of the martyr.

"Butchered by Claverhouse and his bloody band
Raging most ravenously over all the land,
Only for owning Christ's supremacy,
Wickedly wrong'd by encroaching tyranny.
Nothing how dear soever, he too good
Esteemed, nor dear for any truth, his blood."

The authorship of the first version of "Ca' the Yowes to the Knowes" has been claimed for Isobel Pagan, a Muirkirk poetess, who kept a kind of shebeen on the banks of Garpal Water during the early days of last century. Tibbie, as she was usually called, was an ill-favoured hag with a wonderfully sharp, sarcastic tongue. Some of her sayings are clever enough to bear repetition, if they could be shorn of their indelicacy. She could sing such a song as "The Humours of Glen" in a style that never failed to win the favour of a rustic audience. About 1805, Tibbie published a small volume of verse. It is doubtful if a single copy is in existence now, but a few of her pieces have been preserved in collections of Ayrshire song. They are not such as would lead one to suppose that she wrote even a rude version of "Ca' the Yowes to the Knowes."

CHAPTER XIII

"WHERE LUGAR LEAVES HIS MOORLAND PLAID"

"Ev'n winter bleak has charms to me,
When winds rave thro' the naked tree;
Or frosts on hills of Ochiltree
Are hoary grey."

It may have been as a compliment to his friend "winsome Willie" Simson, that Burns included the Lugar in that quartette of streams which he pledged himself to "gar shine up wi' the best." In 1785 Simson read "The Twa Herds," and sent its author a rhyming epistle which drew from Burns a characteristically generous answer, hailing Simson as a "rhyme-composing brither."

"Auld Coila now may fidge fu' fain,
She 's gotten Poets o' her ain,
Chiels wha their chanters winna hain,
But tune their lays,
Till echoes a' resound again
Her weel-sung praise."

Simson, who was another of the many dominie friends of Burns, was one of the few rhymesters who did not rush into print after Burns's success.

Here, however, is one stanza as a sample of his verse:

"Then why should creatures such as we
Presume to fret at Heaven's decree,
Because on poortith's brink;
Sure, whether we are great and rich,
Or mean and poor, it mak's na much,
This life is but a blink.
Swift are our days, as shuttles fly,
Impatient of control,
Till some auld sexton by-and-by
Maun hide us in a hole.
Earth's treasures, life's pleasures,
Will then avail us little;
Scots rhyme then, though prime then,
Will no be worth a spittle."

These lines are taken from an epistle which Simson sent to one Tam Walker, a tailor near Ochiltree, who was the recipient of the "trimming epistle" which appears in Burns's works. Walker ventured to preach the bard of Mossgiel a sermon, of which this was one of the least objectionable heads:

"Fu' weel ye ken, ye 'll gang to——
Gin ye persist in doing ill—
Waes me! ye 're hurlin' down the hill
Withouten dread,
An ye 'll get leave to swear your fill
After ye 're dead."

Burns had had some previous experience of a rhyming tailor in Saunders Tait, and he did not spare poor Walker. In the little churchyard below the village of Ochiltree a monument was erected, in 1853, to three Simsons who were

schoolmasters. On one side of it appears this inscription:

"William Simson, sometime schoolmaster of Ochiltree, afterwards of Cumnock, the 'winsome Willie' of Burns; himself a poet, a wit, a scholar, and a gentleman. Born 1758—died 1815. *Semper honos nomenque tuum laudesque manebunt.*"

Of late the peaceful, unfrequented village on the hill has been bombarded by "snap-shotters" and overrun by curious tourists, who have come in search of Barbie and its "House with the Green Shutters." In justice to the village, be it said that the spiteful back-biting, the overbearing ignorance, the snivelling hypocrisy, and the brutish insensibility to pain, which form the atmosphere of Barbie, do not belong to Ochiltree. George Douglas Brown saw things "right in the middle of his brain"; he had the wondrous gift of speech, pointed, piercing, acrid speech; but this very intensity of vision, this very gift of speech, seemed to restrict him in his great work to the "unredeemed ugliness" of realism. What he would have done had fate allowed, we can but guess. We expected much. His gifts were manifest. The broader vision would have come. His own life, brooded over by the tender love of a mother who laboured with her hands for him, and lightened by the true, deep, grateful love he bore to her, had a side which does not appear in "The House with the Green Shutters." Brown was born in a little cottage on the brae of Ochiltree in 1869. He died in London in 1902.

The history of the lands of Ochiltree goes

back to the days when the Colvilles of Ochiltree had their castle on the banks of Lugar, and quarrelled and fought with their neighbours, the Auchinlecks, on the opposite bank. Tradition tells how Auchinleck sent Ochiltree a present of the bare bones of a sheep's head; how Ochiltree, as a self-respecting laird was bound to do, acknowledged the gift by slaying the donor; and how Douglas, whose vassal Auchinleck was, "redd up the row" by razing the Castle of Ochiltree to the ground.

In the sixteenth century the barony of Ochiltree was acquired by the Stewarts. Andrew Stewart, "the good Lord Ochiltree," was a zealous reformer, and rewarded his own zeal by securing a grant of the Church lands of the parish. His second son was that infamous Captain James Stewart who impeached the Regent Morton, and for a time held the title of Earl of Arran. At Ochiltree John Knox laid aside his stern, reforming manner and, for the second time in life, became a lover. The room in which he was said to have married the younger daughter of Lord Ochiltree used to be, perhaps still is, pointed out to visitors in a house at the foot of the village. There can be little doubt, however, that the marriage was celebrated in a house which is no longer in existence. It is recorded that Ochiltree House was burned down in 1680, the current belief being that the fire was a visitation of Providence (or of incendiary Whigs) upon Sir John Cochrane, for the part he had taken in the betrayal of the hiding-place of Cameron and his friends in Airds Moss.

This Sir John Cochrane, second son of Lord

Dundonald, came into possession of the lands of Ochiltree in 1667. He joined the Argyle and Monmouth rebellion in 1685, was taken prisoner, and confined in the Tolbooth of Edinburgh until a warrant for his execution should be sent from London. Efforts were made to purchase his pardon; but the warrant was known to be on its way, and it was feared that, even if a pardon were obtained, it would come too late. Amid these circumstances, says a popular tradition, his daughter Grisel did a heroic deed. Dressed in her brother's clothes, she rode to a small inn, at which she learned the post-boy was allowed a few hours' rest. While he slept, she contrived to extract the charges from the pistols which he carried. She then rode off and awaited his arrival at a secluded spot. In her fiercest tones she demanded the surrender of the mails. His answer was to flash his pistol in her face. It did no more than flash. His second served him as ill. He then sprang from his horse and tried to grapple with her. She spurred her horse; he gave chase, while his well-trained steed stood still. Suddenly she wheeled round, passed him, and before he could overtake her, she had caught his horse by the bridle and was galloping off with it and the mails, leaving the post-boy cursing on the road. In a distant wood she opened the bags, extracted the warrant for her father's execution, and left horse and mails to look after themselves. Before another warrant could be procured, her father's friends, spurred to greater exertions by her brave act, secured his pardon.

The beautiful opening lines of Burns's

"Lament for Glencairn," associate his well-beloved friend and patron with the Lugar.

> "The wind blew hollow frae the hills ;
> By fits the sun's departing beam
> Look'd on the fading yellow woods
> That wav'd o'er Lugar's winding stream :
> Beneath a craigy steep, a bard,
> Laden with years and meikle pain,
> In loud lament bewail'd his lord,
> Whom death had all untimely ta'en."

It has been conjectured that "the scene of the poem was probably adopted under the influence of whim, or that as many of the Ayrshire streams as possible might be sung in verse"; but a much more probable reason is not far to seek. The lands of Ochiltree were the marriage-portion of the mother of Glencairn. Thereby hangs a romance. James Macrae, son of a widowed washerwoman, went to sea while he was but a boy. Thirty-five years later he was appointed Governor of Madras Presidency. In 1731 he came home to Ayrshire. His mother had been long dead. In her declining years she had been befriended by her niece, the wife of Hugh M'Guire, a humble tradesman with a taste for the fiddle. They had a family of four daughters. Macrae adopted the girls, and had them trained in all the accomplishments of the time. In 1744 the eldest daughter married William, Earl of Glencairn. Their second son was Burns's friend. The youngest daughter of M'Guire married Charles Dalrymple, Sheriff-Clerk of Ayr. Their son was Dalrymple of Orangefield, another friend of Burns. Lady Glencairn survived all her children, and bequeathed the estate of Ochiltree

OLD PLACE OF AUCHINLECK. *Page* 177.

to her grandson, by whom it was sold in lots. Thus the history of the barony was brought to a close.

The beautiful and classic grounds of Auchinleck lie a little to the north of Ochiltree. There the "stately Lugar" glides between high banks of sandstone rock on its way to join the Ayr. On a steep, projecting point where the Dippol Burn, cutting its way through a narrow gorge, joins the Lugar, stands the ancient keep, the sullen dignity of which delighted Dr Johnson more than the elegance of the modern mansion. Some two hundred yards off, the ivied ruins of the second Castle of Auchinleck appear among the trees. It is more than interesting to note the sequence in the architecture of the three buildings — the old keep, on an almost inaccessible site, with its thick walls, the necessities of an age of strife and rapine when comfort was subordinate to safety; the seventeenth century "place of Affleck," strong enough to withstand an assault, if need were, in days when brawls were not unknown, but built with some regard to comfort and convenience; and the modern mansion, striving after grace and beauty in its architecture, the product of an age of security and culture. This last was built by Lord Auchinleck, father of the immortal Bozzy, who planted many of the trees which are now old and magnificent. He made the long avenue—the "Via Sacra" he used to call it—leading to the parish kirk of Auchinleck, which Dr Johnson would not attend, though he condescended to dine with the minister. Lord Auchinleck was passionately fond of his paternal estate. There

he sought rest from the labours of the bench, and relief from the continual worries caused him by the vagaries of that irresponsible, irrepressible, unsettled, undignified son, who was either running after "a land-louping scoundrel of a Corsican," or pinning himself to "an auld dominie wha keepit a schule and ca'd it an academy." Auchinleck, however, had too much of the courtesy of the old Baron not to entertain his son's friend hospitably, although he was a dominie and an "ursa major." These were anxious days for Boswell, all the more that they were wet ones. What could they do but examine the treasures of the library? A chance coin of Cromwell's introduced the tabooed subject of politics. "Pray," said Johnson, "what good did Cromwell ever do to his country?" "God, doctor!" said the old judge, "he gart kings ken they had a lith (joint) in their necks." So began "the transit of Johnson over the Caledonian hemisphere." Poor Jamie's withers were unwrung. He even forgot the note-book. He was a loyal enough son, however, to note down the point his father scored against the mighty doctor. "Dr Johnson challenged him to point out any theological works of merit written by Presbyterian ministers in Scotland. My father, whose studies did not lie much in that way, owned to me afterwards that he was somewhat at a loss how to answer, but that, luckily, he recollected having read in catalogues the title of *Durham on the Galatians*, upon which he boldly said, 'Pray, sir, have you read Mr Durham's excellent commentary on the Galatians?' 'No, sir,' said Dr Johnson. By this lucky thought my father kept

him at bay, and for some time enjoyed the triumph."* The second forbidden subject was thus brought under discussion, and Boswell was in agony. In another day Sir John Pringle would have appeared, and then farewell to harmony! Fortunately the next day was fine.

We cannot follow Boswell through his fussy, fuddling, clever, strange career. Indeed, in a sense, he scarcely belongs to local history. Edinburgh was his birthplace. His affections were divided between it and London. The woods and glens of Auchinleck had few attractions for him. He died a year earlier than Burns. It does not appear that they ever met. Probably the simple ploughman was beneath the notice of the friend of Paoli and Johnson. He appears in Burns's verse as a "gabbler," and as

> "Him wha led o'er Scotland a'
> The meikle Ursa-Major."

Auchinleck had a place in one of the suppressed stanzas of "The Vision":

> "Near by arose a mansion fine,
> The seat of many a muse divine;
> Not rustic muses such as mine,
> With holly crown'd,
> But th' ancient, tuneful, laurell'd Nine,
> From classic ground."

The son and heir of the great biographer inherited his father's literary tastes. He wrote Scots songs so well that some of his productions have been erroneously attributed to Burns. He

* It does not lessen the triumph that Lord Auchinleck's memory played him false. Durham's "excellent commentary" was written, not on the Galatians, but on the Apocalypse.

was the poet-laureate of every kind of association from the local curling club to the Edinburgh Harveian Society. It was not unusual for him to enliven social gatherings by singing his own songs to tunes of his own composing. The same spirit prompted him to present to his friend, Sir Walter Scott, a copy of a book which, as he proudly boasted, had been written, printed, and bound by himself. He revelled in the magnificent library which his grandfather had formed, and from his private press he re-issued some of its choicest treasures. Among the treasures discovered in the Auchinleck library was the romance of *Sir Tristrem*, which Scott published in 1804 under the belief that it was the work of Thomas of Ercildoune.

The Laird of Auchinleck was a typical country gentleman. He was foremost in the social life, in the sports and pastimes, and in the promotion of all the interests, of his county. We have already seen with what enthusiasm he undertook the erection of a memorial to Burns. For his zeal in the cause of law and order during the troublous times of the early reform movement he was rewarded with a baronetcy. Alas! he did not long enjoy the honour. Party feeling ran high in those days. Boswell's "squibs" in the *Glasgow Sentinel* were bitter and personal. James Stuart, younger, of Dunearn, conceived that there was but one answer to the lines—

> "There 's stot-feeder Stuart,
> Kent for that cow-art,
> How glegly he kicks ony ba', man."

He sent Sir Alexander a challenge.

Boswell received it in Edinburgh on his way home from his brother's funeral. The foes met at Auchtertool, in Fifeshire, on March 26, 1822. Sir Alexander was mortally wounded, and died next day. It has been said that Scott had this episode in mind when he wrote the duel scene in *St Ronan's Well*. He is believed to have been the author of a ballad lamenting the death of Boswell, with whom he had dined only two or three days before the tragedy took place.

"'Oh! where have you been, my gallant Knight,
So far from the West Countrie?'
'I have been to weep o'er a brother's bier
Who was right dear to me.'

"'Then linger not in Edinburgh town,
For thy foes await thee there.'
'To-morrow's sun shall see me home
To the banks of woody Ayr.'

. . . . . .

"'Ah! whither row'st thou, Lady bright,
So far to the North Countrie?'
'I fly to save my gallant Lord
Who is right dear to me.'

"'If you are the Lady of Auchinleck,
On the banks of woody Ayr,
Your Lord lies low on the farther beach,
For his foes have met him there.'

"Alas! vindictive was the wrath
And fatal was the blow,
Thou pride of Scotia's chivalry,
In death that laid thee low."

Apart from the Boswells, the literary associations of the Lugar are not important. That shrewd observer of men and manners who wrote above the initials A. K. H. B., was a son of the

manse of Auchinleck. Dr David Patrick, the accomplished editor of Chambers's *Cyclopædia of English Literature*, was born in the Free Church manse of Ochiltree. William M'Gavin, author of *The Protestant*, editor of Howie's *Scots Worthies*, and a keen participator in the religious controversies of his day, was a native of the district. Mr A. B. Todd, the "grand old man" of the Covenant, is still able to break a lance with those who challenge the right of Cameron, Peden, and their kind, to our unbounded admiration. Through a long, chequered life he has been faithful to their cause. He has visited every spot hallowed by their memories; he has taken a lead in every movement to perpetuate their names; and he has won some fame as their historian. He is no mean essayist; he knows and loves nature in all her moods; and his verse entitles him to an honourable place among the bards of Ayrshire. We quote one stanza from "The Circling Year," in which he sings—

> "How April brings the glad glints of the spring;
> How budding May comes in her garments green,
> When streams make music, and the small birds sing;
> How June with rose and daisy decks the scene,
> Weaving her garlands like a fairy screen;
> How July brings the fertilising shower,
> Lading the leafy trees with silver sheen;
> How bounteous August, in the thunder's power,
> Speaks to the earth from heav'n, and gilds the midnight hour."

Although the Laird of Logan was himself far from being a literary character, so much literature of a kind has grown about his name that he merits mention. The celebrated laird was a

sharp-witted, rough-tongued, uneducated country squire, who kept "bachelor hall" at Logan House, a mile or two above the village of Old Cumnock. Burns speaks of him in a letter to Dalrymple of Orangefield. "Let the Wpfull. Squire Hugh Logan," he says, "or Mass James M'Kindlay, go into their primitive nothing. At best they are but ill-digested lumps of chaos, only one of them strongly tinged with bituminous particles and sulphureous effluvia." He was Burns's senior by twenty years, and he may have been one of the company when the poet

> ". . . join'd the honour'd jorum,
> When mighty Squireships of the quorum
> Their hydra drouth did sloken."

Burns claimed the friendship of several of Logan's neighbours. John Kennedy, the "Factor John" of "The Kirk's Alarm," lived in Dumfries House, near which is the ruined Castle of Terringzean, once a seat of the Campbells of Loudoun. George Reid, from whom Burns borrowed the pony on which he rode from Ayrshire on his way to Edinburgh in 1786, was tenant of Barquharrie farm. He was son-in-law to John Tennant of Glenconner, "guid auld Glen, the ace and wale of honest men," who witnessed Burns's baptism, helped him to choose the farm of Ellisland, and was the poet's lifelong friend. Some of Glenconner's sons attained distinction in the world. One of them, "my auld schoolfellow, Preacher Willie," was the author of two rather notable works based on his experiences as Chaplain to the Forces in India; another, "the manly tar, my mason Billie," distinguished him-

self in the French wars, and was offered a knighthood by George IV., declining it, however, on the ground that it would have been "little better than a nickname"; a third, "Wabster Charlie," was the founder of the famous chemical works of St Rollox, Glasgow.

Charles Tennant was not the only Lugar man associated with the development of a new industry. The box-making trade, which still flourishes in Mauchline, owed its rise to the skill and ingenuity of John Crawford; the thrashing-mills of George M'Cartney used to be found in every parish in the country; and William Murdoch, the inventor of gas-lighting, the friend and associate of James Watt, and one of the greatest inventive geniuses Scotland has produced, was born at Bello Mill, not far from the pretty mining village which takes its name from the river.

Near Murdoch's birthplace there is a deep ravine, the scene of a skirmish in which the men of Cumnock rescued a preacher from the hands of the soldiers in 1688. It reminds us that we are still in the land of the Covenanters. Far up one branch of the stream, past the ruins of Kyle Castle the history of which seems to be lost, there is a lonely linn, "dark, deep, wild, woody Connor," which is said to have served Peden for a baptismal font in the days of his wandering. It was a serious offence to have a child baptised by such as "godly Mr Peden." Boswell of Auchinleck was summoned by the Privy Council for it, and would assuredly have been fined had not the Earl of Dumfries cleared the character of his neighbour in this ambiguous way. "My lords," said he, "I am sure that has not been

David Boswell's doing; it has been the doing of an old aunt of his. The aunt has 18,000 merks, which he has the prospect of; and she, my lords, has taken upon her to get the child baptised in that manner; but if you can get hold of his old aunt and hang her, take my word for it, David Boswell will turn Mohammedan if you please." According to one view of the Covenanters, the change would have been neither very great nor for the worse. "Peden," says one of our modern critics, "would have made a model Mohammedan, though the statement must be qualified with an apology to the prophet." There will always be two extreme opposing views, and truth will always lie midway between them. Peden was doubtless goaded into uttering vindictive prophecies, which were probably less harmful than the vindictive acts of his friends. We can make a shrewd guess as to what he would have done had the power been his. We know what he had to suffer. The years of incarceration on the Bass Rock, the dreary months of confinement in the Tolbooth, the sentence of banishment, the skulking like a hunted beast in cave and covert, were stern realities. In any case, the figure of "puir auld Sandy" is too picturesque ever to cease to haunt the wilds of Ayrshire. He was born at Auchincloich, in the parish of Sorn, in 1626. After a ministry of three years in a Galloway parish, he was ejected from his charge in 1663. Years of imprisonment and wandering followed. Various caves in the neighbourhood were his hiding-places; but at last he came to his brother's farm on the banks of the Lugar to die. He was

buried in the churchyard of Auchinleck beside the aisle of the Boswells. Six weeks later his corpse was disinterred and carried to Cumnock to be hung on the gibbet there. This inhuman proceeding was stopped by Lord Dumfries; and Peden's body was buried at the gallows' foot, beside three Covenanters who had been hanged a year before. What is now the square of the town was then the churchyard; but Peden's grave hallowed the hill on which the gibbet stood, and the people of Cumnock came to bear their dead to lie beside the prophet's dust.

CHAPTER XIV

"LOUDOUN'S BONNIE WOODS AND BRAES"

"Where Irvine's streams glide gently through the dale."

THE upper reaches of the Irvine are much less familiar to tourists in the Burns country than they deserve to be. From the bleak moorlands round Loudoun Hill to the busy mining and iron-working town of Hurlford, the river flows through a delightful tract of pastoral country, in which the monotony of green fields is continually relieved by patches of woodland crowning the heights or lining the highways. There is no question of rural depopulation in this region. A century ago much of what is now rich fertile land was moor and moss. The villages, in which handloom weavers struggled for a bare subsistence, are now flourishing centres of a trade which bids fair to rival that of Nottingham. Scarcely thirty years ago the first lace-curtain machine was set up in Darvel, and already there are nearly a score of thriving laceworks in the Irvine valley. There is no lack of enterprise among the descendants of the Chartist weavers and covenanting farmers of Cunninghame and Kyle.

Although Burns claimed the Irvine as one of

his streams, he left his friend Gavin Turnbull to sing its praises. Turnbull's long poem on "Irvine Water" is accurate in its description, if not of the highest poetic quality. Here is a fair specimen :—

"Here winding dales and lengthen'd plains extend,
There, from the vales, the cloud-capt hills ascend ;
Here waving forests, mantled all in green,
With fertile fields and flow'ry lawns between ;
There winding streams the verdant meads adorn,
And, dimpling smooth, reflect the rays of morn.
Along the margin rural seats appear,
And gardens blooming with the vernal year."

The conical peak of Loudoun Hill, which rises abruptly from the undulating moorland at the head of the valley, is one of the most interesting spots in Ayrshire. North, east, and south it overlooks a lonely expanse of moss and heather, a contrast to the fertile vale that stretches westward between richly-wooded slopes on to the sea at Irvine. The Romans marched up through Avondale to their camp on Loudoun Hill ; there Wallace awaited the coming of Fenwick with rich stores for the garrison of Ayr ; there Robert the Bruce won his first pitched battle ; and there the Covenanters made a successful stand against the Royalist troops. It was Sunday morning, the first of June 1679, when a great company gathered on the slopes of Loudoun Hill to hear the Word of God expounded by the venerable Douglas. They had made no secret of their meeting, and they were prepared to be disturbed. Hamilton of Preston, Balfour of Kinloch (the Burley of Sir Walter Scott), and Hackston of Rathillet, were ready to lead the rudely armed

but stout-hearted men of Cunninghame and Kyle against even Claverhouse himself. Three days before, they had visited Rutherglen to stay the rejoicings of Restoration Day, and to burn the Acts which forbade them to worship God in their own way.

Now, on this spot on which their ancestors had fought for liberty, they were ready to give their lives for their faith. From the summit of the hill the watchmen looked anxiously towards Strathaven. Suddenly the report of a carbine rang out above the preacher's voice. It was the signal that the dragoons were in sight. The terrified women and children hastened homeward to warn staunch friends like Nisbet of Hardhill that their swords were needed at Drumclog. The men advanced towards the morass in which the Irvine had its source, a company of pikemen leading, a band of countrymen armed with scythes and pitchforks in the second line, and horsemen, bearing sword and pistol, in the rear. On they went, wading through the marshy ground until they came close to the troopers. Then they made a quick dash forward; a volley at ten paces did not stop them; and so fierce was their onslaught that their opponents were thrown into confusion, and Claverhouse himself narrowly escaped with his life. The horsemen gave the dragoons no time to rally, and soon the royal troops were broken and scattered in flight before the stubborn dalesmen. The success of the Covenanters was complete, and led them to hope that they might make good their cause by force of arms; but wrangling and dissension among the leaders brought speedy and inevitable failure. Three

weeks after Drumclog they were hopelessly routed at Bothwell Bridge.

Great numbers of fugitives fled to the moorland wastes that stretch between Lanarkshire and Ayrshire, and here and there among those lonely solitudes, grey stones bear silent witness to their sufferings. Every churchyard in the Irvine valley has its record. As a rule, the inscriptions are as devoid of Christian charity as of literary merit; but, as was said by Sir Walter Scott, "the peasantry continue to attach to the tombs of those victims of prelacy an honour which they do not render to more splendid mausoleums; and when they point them out to their sons, and narrate the fate of the sufferers, usually conclude by exhorting them to be ready, should times call for it, to resist to the death in the cause of civil and religious liberty, like their brave forefathers." It were a pity if it were otherwise. "It was suffering," says J. R. Green, "that hardened and ennobled the temper of the Scot. It was from those ages of oppression and lawlessness that he drew the rugged fidelity, the dogged endurance, the shrewdness, the caution, the wariness, the rigid thrift, the noble self-dependence, the patience, the daring, that have distinguished him ever since." We have no sympathy with Claverhouse, the persecutor, hounding poor wretches to cruel death on moor and hillside; but John Graham, the hero of Killiecrankie, rejoicing to give up his life because "the day went well for his master," is a noble figure. Nor have we any sympathy with truculent Whigs marching to battle under a banner with the motto, "No quarters for ye active enimies of ye covenant"; but the bracing

air that sweeps over the moors and hills about the sources of Ayr and Irvine is laden with memories of stubborn heroism and dauntless fortitude that are scarcely less inspiring than the memories of Bannockburn. It was some such thought as this that prompted Burns to write:

> "The solemn League and Covenant
> Now brings a smile, now brings a tear;
> But sacred Freedom, too, was theirs:
> If thou'rt a slave, indulge thy sneer."

The village of Newmilns was one of the strongholds of the Covenant. John Campbell, the lord of the manor, John Nevay, the minister of the parish, and John Nisbet, born in a cottage on the manse glebe, all have a place among the "Scots Worthies." Nevay was chaplain to David Leslie's army, and is said to have been the chief instigator of the massacre of the Dunaverty garrison. He is remembered for the share he had in the formation of the metrical version of the Psalms. Nisbet was a leader of the Covenanting troops at Drumclog and at Bothwell Bridge. He suffered death in Edinburgh in 1685, and a plain slab in the churchyard of Newmilns tells how "he manfully struggled for a series of years to stem the tide of national degeneracy, and liberate his country from the tyrannical aggressions of the perjured House of Stuart." Hugh Brown, a native of Newmilns, another of the many minor poets of Ayrshire, kept school at Drumclog, and there conceived the thoughts which he embodied in "The Covenanters."

During "the troublous times" the tower of

Newmilns, a former residence of the Campbells of Loudoun, was occupied by a company of troops under a notorious Captain Inglis. They scoured the country in search of conventicles, and showed no mercy to any whom they found amid what they deemed suspicious circumstances. On one occasion they surprised a small company in a secluded farmhouse near Kilmarnock. The soldiers forced their way into the house, and shot down the first man whom they encountered. Seven others were conveyed to Newmilns and imprisoned in the tower. There were men who had fought at Drumclog and Airds Moss among the friends of the prisoners, and they resolved to attempt a rescue. They awaited a time when the majority of the garrison were out on duty, and then they assailed the doors with heavy sledge-hammers. In the struggle, one of the rescuing party was shot. He was buried close to the wall of the tower, and on a tablet commemorating his death, these verses are inscribed :

> "'Cause I Christ's prisoners relieved,
> I of my life was soon bereaved,
> By cruel enemies with rage,
> In that encounter did engage ;
> The martyr's honour and his crown
> Bestowed on me ! O high renown !
> That I should not only believe,
> But for Christ's cause my life should give."

On his return, Inglis sought in vain for prisoners or rescuers ; but he satisfied his sense of justice by sending a party to shoot one John Smith who had given food to the fugitives.

Nothing endears Burns more to the lover of Scottish song than his anxious care to preserve

the work of his forerunners. He was untiring in his efforts to discover the circumstances amid which each ballad was written, to add to every song the local colour which so much enhances its interest. He was well acquainted with the upper valley of the Irvine. He paid more than one visit to his friends at Loudoun Manse; and he spent a day at Galston and Newmilns in 1788, when he was on his way to Edinburgh (by Glasgow) to settle accounts with Creech, and to conclude the bargain for the farm of Ellisland.

It is not unlikely that on one of these visits he walked to the old mill on the banks of the Irvine, near where Newmilns railway station is now situated, to look upon the field in which the "lass of Patie's Mill" was "tedding of the hay, bare-headed on the green," when Allan Ramsay and the lord of Loudoun rode past one summer morning. The parish of Keith Hall in Aberdeenshire also has a "Patie's Mill," which claims to be the scene of the song; but Burns had the authority of Lord Loudoun for saying that the song was composed by Ramsay in the course of a visit which he paid to Loudoun Castle. Another mill on the Irvine furnishes an instance of Burns's zeal for the "auld Scots sangs." In a note to the humorous ballad, "I had a horse, and I had nae mair," he says:—"A John Hunter, ancestor to a very respectable farming family who lived in a place in the parish of Galston called Bar Mill, was the luckless hero that 'had a horse, and had nae mair.' For some little youthful follies, he found it necessary to make a retreat to the West Highlands, where he 'feed himself to a Highland laird.'" Burns got this anecdote from

a descendant of the "luckless hero" himself. Bar Mill lies near Galston, on the road to Newmilns, a road which affords one of the most charming walks in Ayrshire. On one side are the "bonnie woods and braes" which Tannahill so sweetly sang; on the other, narrow belts of oak scarcely conceal the stream beyond which green slopes ascend to dark masses of pine on Galston moors. It is a poet's walk. From one side come the notes of farewell which Lord Moira sang to his fair lady:

> "Loudoun's bonnie woods and braes
> I maun leave them a', lassie;
> Wha can thole when Britain's faes
> Would gi'e Britons law, lassie?"

We look back across a century, and see the bleak barren uplands on the other side. The wind is driving dark clouds across the sky, and bitter showers are beating on a solitary figure striding through the reeds and rushes. It is Robert Burns on his way home to Mossgiel from the Manse of Loudoun, singing as he goes what he thought would be "the last song he should ever measure in Caledonia." We can almost hear his melancholy chant:

> "The gloomy night is gathering fast,
> Loud roars the wild inconstant blast!
> Yon murky cloud is foul with rain,
> I see it driving o'er the plain;
> . . . . . .
> "Farewell, old Coila's hills and dales,
> Her heathy moors and winding vales;
> The scenes where wretched fancy roves,
> Pursuing past, unhappy loves!

Farewell, my friends! farewell, my foes!
My peace with these, my love with those—
The bursting tears my heart declare,
Farewell, my bonnie banks of Ayr!"

Among the fellow-exiles of James, Earl of Loudoun, during the dark days of persecution, was John Lawrie, the minister of Auchinleck, with whom he contracted a warm friendship. Lord Loudoun died in exile in 1684, but his friend returned to his parish after the revolution of 1688. Their friendship was not forgotten in the days of their grandchildren. In 1763, the grandson of Lord James was Earl of Loudoun, and he presented George, the grandson of John Lawrie, to the parish of Loudoun. George Lawrie proved an excellent pastor. Kind and gentle in disposition, eloquent in the pulpit, and active in the discharge of all his duties, he was beloved alike by the highest and the humblest of his parishioners. He was the friend of such leading men of letters as Blacklock, Blair, and Robertson, and he held out a helping hand to Ossian" Macpherson in his early days. On the appearance of the Kilmarnock edition of Burns's poems, Mr Lawrie (he was made D.D. in 1791) invited the poet to visit him at St Margaret's Hill, as he called the manse. Burns was then arranging for his passage to Jamaica, and his visit was one of farewell. "Dr Lawrie," said Gilbert Burns, "had several accomplished daughters; one of them played the spinnet; the father and mother led down the dance; the rest of the sisters, the brother, the poet, and the other guests, mixed in it. It was a delightful family scene for our poet, then lately introduced to the

world." It inevitably recalls another charming scene in the house of a French peasant and these words of Sterne :—"The old man, as soon as the dance ended, said that this was their constant way; and that all his life long he had made it a rule, after supper was over, to call out his family to dance and rejoice; believing, he said, that a cheerful and contented mind was the best sort of thanks to Heaven that an illiterate peasant could pay. 'Or a learned prelate either,' said I." Burns's view of the scene has been preserved in a fragment of verse:

"The night was still, and o'er the hill
The moon shone on the castle wa';
The mavis sang, while dew-drops hang
Around her on the castle wa'.
Sae merrily they danced the ring,
Frae e'enin' till the cock did craw;
And ay the o'erword o' the spring,
Was 'Irvine's bairns are bonnie a'.'"

Dr Lawrie's son, who succeeded him in the Manse of Loudoun, used to tell of Burns's visit. Though the dance was not so prolonged as the poet indicates, the family were waiting breakfast next morning and Burns had not appeared. "Young Mr Lawrie was sent upstairs to see what detained him. He met him coming down. 'Well, Mr Burns, how did you sleep last night?' 'Sleep, my young friend! I scarcely slept at all —I have been praying all night. If you go up to the room, you will find my prayers on the table.'" The prayer was that well-known petition:

"O Thou dread Pow'r who reign'st above,
I know thou wilt me hear;
When for this scene of peace and love,
I make my pray'r sincere.

. . . . . .

"When, soon or late, they reach that coast,
O'er life's rough ocean driven,
May they rejoice, no wand'rer lost,
A family in Heaven!"

It is not generally known that the beautiful and favourite psalm-tune "Evan" is an American adaptation of a melody originally composed by Rev. W. Havergal, Rector of St Nicholas, Worcester, for the prayer which Burns wrote in Loudoun Manse.

The Manse of Loudoun is beautifully situated on a bank above the highway, on the outskirts of Newmilns. It has been extended since Burns's visit, and the internal arrangements were entirely changed a few years ago, so that the bedroom which he occupied is now part of a passage. The only relic of his visit is an old window-sash, on a pane of which one can decipher the words, "Lovely Mrs Lawrie: she is all charms"—believed to have been written by the poet. On a narrow line of stone which runs along the front of the building, are engraved the initials of Dr Lawrie and his wife—"G. L. 1768 M.C."—and the words, "Jehovah Jireh" (the Lord will provide), which are said to have been the witty clergyman's answer to some solicitous friend who wondered how he would make provision for his large family of daughters. As the inscription is arranged, the word "Jehovah" appears almost immediately above the doorway. Every passing beggar thinks he has a right to receive charity from the occupant of the parish manse, and the right is seldom disputed. On one occasion, however, the family at Loudoun Manse was from home, and a

tramp solicited alms in vain. On rejoining a companion whom he had left on the roadway below, he was greeted with the usual formula, "What did ye get?" "Naething," he said, "Mister Jehovah's no at hame."

Dr Lawrie's friendship for Burns was fraught with momentous issues, not only to the poet, but also to Scotland. Burns himself has given the reason. "My chest was on the road to Greenock; I had composed the last song I should ever measure in Caledonia, when a letter from Dr Blacklock to a friend of mine (Dr Lawrie) overthrew all my schemes by opening up new prospects to my poetic ambition." It would be difficult to exaggerate the effect of this letter on Burns. He looked forward with despair to his proposed emigration to Jamaica. It was exile; hopeless, cheerless exile. In his first enthusiasm, Dr Blacklock's letter seemed to hold out an offer of life, and a promise of fame; it was a prelude to the realisation of his dearest hopes, and the fulfilment of his fondest dreams. It were idle to tell what Scotland would have lost had Burns gone to the West Indies; to estimate her poverty, had he not enriched her with the wealth of song which he produced in Ellisland and Dumfries.

Another George Lawrie, grandson of the poet's friend, was born in Loudoun Manse in 1797. Like his father, his grandfather, and three more of his immediate ancestors, he became a worthy minister of the Church of Scotland. In 1874, when he was settled in the parish of Monkton, he published a small volume of poems, one of which has become deservedly popular

wherever Scotsmen gather. If only for their local allusions, we must quote two stanzas:

"Hae ye mind o' lang, lang syne,
When the simmer days were fine,
And the sun shone brighter far
Than he's ever done sin' syne;
Do ye mind the Hag-brig turn,
Whare we guddled in the burn,
And were late for the schule in the mornin'?

"What famous fun was there,
Wi' our games at houn' and hare;
When we played the truant frae the schule,
Because it was the fair;
And we ran frae Patie's Mill,
Through the woods on Whinny Hill,
And were fear'd for the tawse in the mornin'."

We cannot leave Loudoun Manse without recalling that there Dr Norman M'Leod, that staunchest friend of the "Auld Kirk" in the days that succeeded the Disruption, began his ministry. There he wrote his *Cracks about the Kirk*, and girded himself for the greater work he was to do as editor of *Good Words*.

On a cliff overlooking the Hag Burn in which Dr Lawrie "guddled" in boyhood, the ruins of Achruglen are pointed out. Tradition says that this was the Loudoun Castle which was burned by the Kennedys in the sixteenth century, in revenge for the murder of Lord Cassillis by the Campbells in 1527. As part of the present castle is said to date from the twelfth century, one is forced to doubt the tradition. It is, however, generally believed in Ayrshire that the ballad "Edom o' Gordon" relates to the burning of Loudoun Castle. The local version, which is

given by Dr Norman M'Leod in the statistical account of the parish, is said to have been known among the peasantry from time immemorial.

The existing mansion is a magnificent building situated in a wealth of wood above the Irvine. It has been appropriately called "The Windsor of Scotland." The oldest portion of the building was partially destroyed by General Monk, in the course of a siege in which the castle was defended by Lady Loudoun. The high battlemented tower which rises above the surrounding pile dates from the fifteenth century. Chancellor Loudoun built a large addition in 1622, and the chief portion was completed in 1811. Close to the castle wall there grows a venerable yew-tree, under which, it is said, one of the family charters was signed in the time of William the Lion, as was also one of the Articles of Union of the British parliaments. The second Earl of Loudoun used to address his letters from Leyden to

> "The Gudewife at the Auldton,
> At the old yew-tree of Loudoun,
> Scotland,"

and they always reached their destination in safety.

James V. is reported to have said of the Scottish crown: "It cam' wi' a lass, and it will gang wi' a lass." With greater truth, a similar prophecy might have been made of each of the successive families who have held the lands of Loudoun. Through marriage with an only daughter of the preceding lord, the estate was acquired by the Craufurds, the maternal

LOUDOUN KIRK.

ancestors of William Wallace, early in the thirteenth century. A century later it came, in the same fashion, into the hands of the Campbells, from whom it passed again in the same way to the Hastings family in the beginning of last century.

It was a dull grey day in November when last we visited the old churchyard of Loudoun. The sombre branches of the encircling yews were waving wearily in the fitful wind that sighed among the leafless limbs of the taller trees beyond the moss-grown wall. A faint murmur came from the tiny brook that trickled past the churchyard gate; and there was no other sound. Not a bird chirped; not a sign of life was heard from the line of low thatched cottages outside the gate; there was a melancholy fascination in the scene. By and by an old man wrapped in a grey plaid hobbled up the path, coughing as he came. The spell was broken.

It was strange to hear the tone of proprietorship in which the old caretaker talked of his sacred charges. "I hae them a' here," he said. "I hae the Chancellor, and I hae John, the fourth Earl, wha planted a' the bonnie trees on Loudoun braes; and I hae Lady Hastings lying here wi' her husband's hand in hers, married in death, as Lord Moira wanted them to be when he died in Malta."

Only the ruined gable of the nave is left of the old church of Loudoun. The choir, which forms the burying-place of the Loudoun family, was restored by Lord Bute in 1898. The deeds of those who sleep there are told in the history of their country. A graceful monument beside the

choir recalls the sad, untimely death of Lady Flora Hastings, the sweet singer whose wrongs were, sixty years ago, a world's talk. A volume of Lady Flora's poems was published after her death, and the proceeds devoted to the erection of a memorial school. Her verse is simple and tender, deeply religious in tone, a reflection of the purity and gentleness of the author's soul. This is her "Swan Song":

"Grieve not that I die young. Is it not well
To pass away ere life hath lost its brightness?
Bind me no longer, sisters, with the spell
Of love and your kind words. List ye to me:
Here I am bless'd—but I would be more free;
I would go forth in all my spirit's lightness.
Let me depart!

"Ah! who would linger till bright eyes grow dim,
Kind voices mute, and faithful bosoms cold?
Till carking care, and coil, and anguish grim,
Cast their dark shadows o'er this faëry world;
Till fancy's many-coloured wings are furl'd,
And all, save the proud spirit, waxeth old?
I would depart!

"Thus would I pass away—yielding my soul
A joyous thank-offering to Him who gave
That soul to be, those starry orbs to roll.
Thus—thus exultingly would I depart,
Song on my lips, ecstasy in my heart.
Sisters—sweet sisters, bear me to my grave—
Let me depart!"

A simple stone in the churchyard tells that "Here lies Thomas Flemming of Loudoun Hill, who, for appearing in arms in his own defence, and in defence of the Gospel, according to the obligation of our National Covenant, and agree-

KILMARNOCK CROSS AND LAIGH KIRK STEEPLE.

ably to the Word of God, was shot in an encounter at Drumclog, June 1, 1679, by bloody Graham of Claverhouse."

There is no indication that the plain slab which is sacred to the memory of John Richmond and Janet Little, his spouse, is of special interest. Nevertheless, Janet Little was a person of some note in her day. She was born near Ecclefechan in 1759, and was engaged in the service of Mrs Dunlop when Burns used to visit Dunlop House. She afterwards came to Loudoun Castle with Mrs Dunlop's daughter, and was placed in charge of the household dairy, an incident which gave her the title of "The Scottish Milkmaid." In 1789 Janet sent Burns a rhyming epistle of some little merit, beginning:

> "Fair fa' the honest, rustic swain,
> The pride o' a' our Scottish plain:
> Thou gies us joy to hear thy strain,
> And notes sae sweet:
> Old Ramsay's shade revived again,
> In thee we greet."

Janet visited Burns at Ellisland, and has recorded in rhyme the despair with which she saw the poet enter the house, his arm broken by a fall from his horse. In 1792 appeared *The Poetical Works of Janet Little, the Scottish Milkmaid,* one more of the many volumes for which Robert Burns was indirectly responsible.

The neighbouring village of Galston was the scene of the labours of one of the victims of Burns's satire. Dr Smith, the great-grandfather of Robert Louis Stevenson, was a cultivated man and a keen student, though not an impassioned preacher. He resented Burns's allusions to him

in "The Twa Herds" and "The Holy Fair," though the poet, doubtless, intended to be complimentary to a New Light divine when he wrote:

"What signifies his barren shine
Of moral pow'rs an' reason?
His English style, an' gesture fine
Are a' clean out o' season."

He gave the reverend gentleman a better sample of his satiric ware in "The Kirk's Alarm":

"Irvine-side! Irvine-side!
Wi' your turkey-cock pride,
Of manhood but sma' is your share;
Ye've the figure, 'tis true,
Even your faes will allow,
And your friends daurna say you hae mair."

John Rankine of Adamhill and the "wee Davock" of Burns's "Inventory," both spent their latter days in Galston.

Nothing is left of the house of the Keiths of Galston; but the huge square tower of Bar Castle, in which John Knox preached when he made his Ayrshire tour in 1556, still stands at the head of the village street. It was a favourite haunt of John Wright, the chief of the local bards of Galston, who sang of it:

"Bar Castle! tenantless and wild!
Dome of delight! dear haunt of mine!
The shock of ages thou hast foiled,
Since fell the last of Lockhart's line;
Thou, left a hermit, to grow grey,
O'er swallow, crane, and bird of prey."

Poor Wright, after a youth of hardship and toil,

gave promise of true poetical ability, and was befriended by Christopher North, to whom he dedicated the first edition of his poems. Success proved his ruin. His dissipated habits brought him to an early grave.

CHAPTER XV

"THE STREETS AND NEUKS O' KILLIE"

"The simple Bard, unbroke by rules of art,
He pours the wild effusions of the heart:
And if inspir'd, 'tis Nature's pow'rs inspire;
Hers all the melting thrill, and hers the kindling fire."

KILMARNOCK is neither so beautifully situated nor so historically interesting as Ayr or Dumfries. It is a town of chimney-stalks and whirring machinery, of engineers and manufacturers; not a place which one expects to find enriched with literary associations. Yet Kilmarnock is the very centre of the Burns cult. Since John Wilson printed the first edition of the poet's works, there have not been wanting a few faithful enthusiasts ready to give the leisure of a life-time to the study of everything connected with their favourite poet. Such a one was James M'Kie, the publisher of the facsimile of the first edition of Burns's poems, and of the *Burns Calendar*, and collector of the library which is now in the Kilmarnock monument.

It is at least eight hundred years since a church was dedicated to Saint Marnock, on the banks of the stream which flows through the town. By and by a cornmill was erected where

KILMARNOCK—WATERLOO STREET. *Page* 209.
(First Edition was printed in the nearer attic above Loan Office on the right.)

the Cross is now, and a straggling village grew up about the church and the mill. In Burns's time Kilmarnock was an important market-town, the centre of much trade and the seat of several manufactures. Its appearance was not attractive. The thatched houses were huddled close together in narrow streets radiating from the Cross. The streets twisted and turned about in so puzzling a fashion that strangers wandered through them as through a maze, and there is at least one case on record in which a traveller could not for the life of him discover a way out of the town. Weaving-shops, tan-yards, and shoe-factories were common. That the workers bore the marks of their trade about with them, is indicated by Burns:

"Kilmarnock wabsters, fidge and claw,
An' pour your creeshie nations;
An' ye wha leather rax an' draw,
Of a' denominations."

In spite of their uncomfortable circumstances, the "wabsters" and other folk of Kilmarnock extracted a considerable amount of enjoyment from life. In summer they met on the bowling-green, convenient to which was Sandy Patrick's tavern, famous for its home-brewed ale, and a favourite howff of Robert Burns on market-days. In winter they revelled in the roaring game, sometimes even flooding the Cross when the frost was like to hold for a time. Among them, Tam Samson was the keenest:

"He was the king of a' the core,
To guard, or draw, or wick a bore,
Or up the rink like Jehu roar
In time o' need."

Holiday did not mean exodus then. The Kilmarnock weavers enjoyed the Fair days, the king's birthday, and other holidays at home. Especially on Fastern's E'en, the fun was fast and furious. It began in the morning with an exhibition of the fire-engines at the Cross. The people of Kilmarnock had every reason to be careful that their fire-engines were in order. They saw them only too often at serious work; but the country folk were attracted by the efforts of the fireman to amuse them. John Ramsay tells how he set about it:

"Out owre the highest houses' tap,
He sent the torrent scrievin';
The curious crowd aye nearer crap,
To see sic feats achievin'!
But scarcely had they thicken'd weel,
And got in trim for smilin',
When round the pipe gaed like an eel,
And made a pretty skailin'
'Mang them that day."

An example of the dry humour of the Scot! The trades marched in procession through the town; races were held in the grounds of Kilmarnock house; cock-fighting was not unknown. In the evening, parties met in taverns, in dancing-halls, in private houses, to prolong the festivities far into the night.

Now all is changed. The population has been more than quadrupled; the majority of the narrow streets have been swept away; the people take their pleasures more sedately, and farther from home; immense works, in which hundreds of men are employed, have succeeded the single apartments, in which handloom weavers or shoemakers wrought in twos and threes.

KILMARNOCK MONUMENT. *Page* 221.

In no town has greater care been taken to identify every spot connected with Burns or his friends. Many of the old landmarks have necessarily been removed, but their situations are exactly known. The book-shop of John Wilson, the houses of John Goldie and Bailie Gregory, and the place of business occupied by Robert Muir, were all at the Cross. They have disappeared, or have been changed beyond recognition. Sandy Patrick's tavern, near the head of the Foregate, in which Burns used to meet his cronies, is no longer in existence, and a new block of buildings stands on the site of the Old Commercial Hotel in Croft Street. It was in the hall of this hotel that Burns heard Jeanie Glover sing her own song, "O'er the muir amang the heather"; there, too, he met his masonic brethren under the presidency of Major Parker, the "sons of old Killie, assembled by Willie, to follow the noble vocation." Parker's house, Assloss, still stands some two miles beyond the town, on the way to Fenwick. Bailie Greenshields' house and brewery are still to be seen in Grange Street; Tam Samson's house has been but little changed since the time when Burns spent merry evenings there, and the name "Samson" still appears on the signboards in the nursery adjoining the entrance to the Kay Park, on the opposite side of the road. From the Monument in the Park one looks down on Braehead House, in which lived Paterson, the Town-clerk, another of Burns's friends. Most interesting of all is the attic above a pawnbroker's shop in Waterloo Street. There, in 1786, John Wilson printed the famous Kilmarnock edition of Burns's poems. At the corner of

Waterloo Street and Green Street, above a fruit-shop, is the house in which Gilbert Burns was married. A narrow bridge across the Marnock, bearing a record of the great flood of 1852, leads from Waterloo Street to the Angel Hotel, the modern representative of Begbie's Inn, to which the Laigh Kirk worshippers used to straggle "in a raw, to pour divine libations," when the long service was at an end.

John Goldie, a native of the adjoining parish of Galston, was one of the most notable men in Kilmarnock in Burns's time. He was a lad of parts, an ardent student of mathematics and astronomy, and a skilful mechanic. He was reared in the strictest Antiburgher school, and used to travel on Sundays from Galston to Kilmaurs, where a famous Antiburgher preacher was located. Goldie eventually settled down as a wine-merchant at the Cross of Kilmarnock, and devoted his leisure to the study of theology. It was a strange combination. In 1780 he published his *Essays on Various Important Subjects*. This "attempt to distinguish true from false religion" was decidedly unorthodox, and won the favour of the more advanced New Lights. When a second edition of "Goudie's Bible" appeared in 1785, Burns wrote the epistle which has brought Goldie more fame than the six volumes of his Bible.

"O Goudie, terror o' the Whigs,
Dread o' black coats and reverend wigs!
Sour Bigotry on his last legs
Girns an' looks back,
Wishing the ten Egyptian plagues
May seize you quick."

Goldie is reported to have been the means of introducing Burns to the Muir and Samson set in Kilmarnock, who took part with him in the arrangements for getting the poems printed. He continued his theological writing until his death in 1809; he was over ninety when his last work, *Conclusive Evidences against Atheism*, was published. David Sillar and Gavin Turnbull followed the example of Burns in making Goldie the subject of their verse. Turnbull's elegy gives what is probably an accurate picture of the "philosopher," as Goldie was usually called:

"He was a man without a flaw;
In 's life he never err'd at a';
His ain opinion was the law,
Withouten feed;
The world to him were madmen a',
But now he 's dead!"

No one was fonder of entertaining Burns when he visited Kilmarnock than Thomas Samson, a prosperous seed-merchant. He was a noted sportsman, so fond of the moors that he hoped to die in them—a hope that suggested to Burns the elegy which has made Tam Samson famous. William Parker used to tell the story of the first appearance of the elegy. The usual company had assembled to meet Burns in Sandy Patrick's "public," and to hear the poet read his latest productions. In the course of the evening he recited the elegy, to the delight of all except the sportsman himself. The refrain, "Tam Samson 's dead," was not to his liking, and at length he roared out, "Ay, but I'm no deid yet. I wad rather ye wad tell the world that I'm hale and hearty." To propitiate his friend, who was

evidently displeased at what he may have taken for a gruesome prophecy, Burns thereupon wrote the "Per Contra":

"Go, Fame, an' canter like a filly
Thro' a' the streets an' neuks o' Killie,
Tell ev'ry social, honest billie
To cease his grievin',
For, yet unskaith'd by Death's gleg gullie,
Tam Samson's leevin!"

Samson lived for ten years after the composition of the elegy. On his tombstone in the Laigh Churchyard is inscribed:

"Thomas Samson,
Died the 12th December 1795,
Aged 72 years.

"Tam Samson's weel-worn clay here lies,
Ye canting Zealots spare him!
If Honest Worth in Heaven rise,
Ye'll mend or ye win near him."

Curiously enough, Samson, Robertson, and Mackinlay, who are all mentioned in the first stanza of the elegy, are buried in adjoining graves. In the same churchyard are the graves and monuments of the Kilmarnock martyrs, prominent among them being that of John Nisbet, who was hanged at the Cross, 14th April 1683.

It would be tedious to tell even the little that is known of the rest of Burns's Kilmarnock friends; but Robert Muir deserves at least a passing mention. Gilbert Burns wrote of him as one who was very dear to the poet's heart. Burns called him "the disinterested friend of my early life." Muir was a wine-merchant, and subscribed largely for the Kilmarnock and Edinburgh editions of the poems. He died of con-

sumption in 1788, at the age of thirty, to the great grief of Burns, who, in sending his epitaph to Mrs Dunlop, coupled Muir and Highland Mary together as the dearest of the friends he had lost.

> "What man could esteem or what woman could love,
> Was he who lies under this sod;
> If such Thou refusest admission above,
> Then whom wilt Thou favour, Good God?"

The tower is all that is left of the old Laigh Kirk, in which the famous "Ordination" was performed. One Sunday in 1801, when Dr Mackinlay was preaching, the cry was raised that the building was about to fall. A panic fright ensued. Women and children were trampled to death, and many people were maimed for life. It was one of those unaccountable unfounded panics of which history presents so many examples; but no service was held in the old church after its occurrence. The present Low Church was built in 1802.

The ministers of Kilmarnock figure so prominently in Burns's poems, and the positions they occupied are as a rule so obscurely indicated, that a few simple statements respecting them may be admissible. From the time of the Revolution (1688) the parish church, or Laigh Kirk, was served by two ministers; one in the first charge, the other in the second charge. John Robertson was minister in the first charge in Burns's time. He was a Moderate, and therefore advised by Burns to

> "... try the wicked town of Ayr,
> For there they'll think you clever."

Three ministers of the second charge appear in Burns's poems. William Lindsay, with whom "Curst common-sense cam' in wi' Maggie Lauder," was appointed in 1763. His election by Lord Glencairn, who was patron of the living, was extremely unpopular, and an attempt was made to prevent it. A report was spread that Glencairn had chosen Lindsay because his wife, Margaret Lauder, had been a servant in the Glencairn family; and patron and priest were so thoroughly pelted by the mob with mud, stones, and even more objectionable missiles, that the proceedings had to be abandoned. As the "scoffing ballad" to which Burns alludes says:

"Though meek and gentle Lindsay was,
And had at heart the guid auld cause,
Yet nocht could mak' the rabble pause.
Good people, hear my ditty.

"Their fury raise to sic a height,
That here he durst not pass the night,
But aff to Irvine took his flight.
Good people, hear my ditty."

The patron's choice was eventually forced upon the people by the strong arm of the law, and Lindsay ministered in the second charge till his death, in 1774.

His successor was John Mutrie, another Moderate, and associated by Burns with Robertson in the stanza:

"Mutrie and you were just a match,
We never had sic twa drones;
Auld Hornie did the Laigh Kirk watch,
Just like a winkin' baudrons."

On his death in 1785, Mutrie was succeeded by

Mackinlay, the Evangelical divine who was to put "common-sense" to flight.

> "This day Mackinlay taks the flail,
> An' he's the boy will blaud her!
> He'll clap a shangan on her tail,
> An' set the bairns to daud her
> Wi' dirt this day."

Dr Mackinlay was a general favourite in Kilmarnock in spite of his *Auld Licht* opinions. His voice was melodious, his manner charming, and his interest in the welfare of his people unfeigned. He was admitted to the first charge in 1809, and occupied that position till his death, in 1841.

As the town grew, the Low Church became overcrowded, and in 1731 the High Church was built, at the head of Soulis Street. For a time services were conducted in it by one of the two collegiate ministers of the Low Church; but in 1764 James Oliphant was engaged as pastor. He was an *Auld Licht*, and figures in "The Ordination":

> "But Oliphant aft made her yell."

His successor was the famous John Russel, who was ordained in 1774. He was a native of Morayshire, and, before coming to Kilmarnock, he taught the parish school in Cromarty. He belonged to a class of dominies, now happily extinct, who loved to see their pupils tremble at their approach. His countenance was dark and forbidding, his voice like thunder, his frame coarse and massive; and the children feared

and detested him. When he became a preacher, he continued to enforce the rule of fear :—

"But now the Lord's ain trumpet touts,
Till a' the hills are rairin',
An' echoes back return the shouts ;
Black Russel is na spairin' :
His piercing words, like Highlan' swords,
Divide the joints and marrow ;
His talk o' Hell, whare devils dwell,
Our vera 'sauls does harrow'
Wi' fright that day."

To Burns he appeared the personification of bigotry and loveless Calvinism. What claim had he to be a disciple of the gentle Teacher of Nazareth? Children fled in terror from him; the sound of his staff on the street was the signal for the closing of doors; and the essence of his preaching was a dangling over

"A vast, unbottom'd, boundless pit,
Fill'd fou o' lowin' brunstane,
Whase ragin' flame, an' scorchin' heat,
Wad melt the hardest whunstane."

Burns saw only his defects. He had no sympathy with his zeal. He could neither understand nor appreciate the spirit of Russel, who, after all, in his severity and intrepidity, was near akin to the stern Reformers of two centuries before. Most mercilessly the poet lashed him. A quarrel between Russel and Alexander Moodie, the incumbent of the neighbouring parish of Riccarton, gave him his first opportunity, and led to the composition of "The Twa Herds," the first of the series of satires in which he exposed the "glowrin' superstition" which he believed to be associated with much of the religious profes-

sion of his time. In all of them, "Black Jock," or "Rumble John," came in for the severest castigation.

Russel remained in his charge in Kilmarnock till 1800, when he was called to Stirling, where he ministered for seventeen years. He was buried in the old churchyard of Stirling. The monument to his memory was renewed in 1886, and on the back of it was carved an inscription which might have made both poet and preacher chuckle in their graves:

> "'What herd like Russel telled his tale,
> His voice was heard ower muir and dale,
> His piercin' words, like Highlan' swords,
> Divide the joints and marrow.'
> BURNS."

As becomes the poetic birthplace of Robert Burns, Kilmarnock has produced not a few notable literary men. Every community of weavers has been prolific in versemakers. It used to be said that every second "Paisley body" one met was a poet. The weavers of Kilmarnock were almost as much given to rhyming. They had the example of Robert Burns to induce them to appear in print. Of the minor poets of Kilmarnock who wrought at the loom, were Gavin Turnbull, the friend of Burns; John Burtt, whose best and most popular song, "O'er the mist-shrouded cliffs of the lone mountain straying," has been often attributed to Burns; John Kennedy, who was, like Burtt, one of the Reformers of the beginning of last century, to whose memory Lord Rosebery in 1885 unveiled the liberty-crowned monument in the Kay Park;

John Ramsay, author of *Woodnotes of a Wanderer;* and Archibald M'Kay, some of whose *Ingleside Lilts* are worth preserving, while his fame rests on his *History of Kilmarnock.* M'Kay in his later years kept a small stationer's shop, which became a rendezvous for the literary lights of the town. We have included Gavin Turnbull among those who wrought at the loom, though the truth seems to be that Turnbull wrought as little as possible at anything. He lived in abject poverty in a garret in Soulis Street, the sole furnishing of which consisted of a straw bed, a stone by the fire for a chair, a tin kettle as cooking utensil, the lid serving for a plate, and a window-sill in lieu of a table. It is almost incredible that any one amid such circumstances could have been a student of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Shenstone; yet Turnbull not only studied but also imitated them. This is an example of his Spenserian style, from "The Bard," a poem he inscribed to Burns:

"There whilom ligd, ypent in garret high,
A tuneful Bard, who well could touch the lyre,
Who often sung so soot and witchingly,
As made the crowds, in silent gaze, admire;
Ymolten with the wild, seraphic fire
Which his sweet sonnets eathly could impart,
They list'ning stood, ne never did they tire,
So steal'd his soft persuasion on the heart,
So smooth his numbers flow'd, all unrestrain'd by art."

His ambition to reproduce both the rhythm and the archaic language of "The Faery Queen" o'erleaps itself, of course; but that such an ambition should rise at all in the breast of a drunken weaver supping oatmeal brose from the

lid of a tin kettle, is more astonishing than that a ploughman should be moved to sing the daisy which his share turned over. Turnbull afterwards joined the ranks of strolling players, and styled himself comedian. He was in Dumfries in 1793, when Burns sent three of his songs to Thomson. He published a second volume of verse in 1794, but of his subsequent fate little is known. He is supposed to have ended his days in America.

Kilmarnock claims two poetesses, so widely different in character that one hesitates to name them in a breath. Jeanie Glover is generally credited with the authorship of "O'er the muir amang the heather." Little more is known of her than what Burns tells us. She was an excellent singer, spoiled by the possession of a beautiful face and figure. Had she lived in these days, she would have inevitably appeared as a music-hall artiste; but her opportunities were limited, and she eloped with the "sleight-of-hand blackguard" in whose company Burns saw her. She is supposed to have gone with him to Ireland, where she died in 1801.

Marion Paul Aird was born in Glasgow, but her forefathers were Ayrshire yeomen, and she spent the greater part of her life in Kilmarnock. Her verses are simple, serious, and generally religious in tone. One of her hymns, "Had I the wings of a dove I would fly," is well known. Much of what she wrote and published in *The Home of the Heart and other Poems* and in *Heart Histories* has been deservedly forgotten, but there is a tenderness in the best of her poems which would give them

an honoured place in the anthology that might be made of Kilmarnock verse:

"'Tis the fa' o' the leaf, and the cauld winds are blawin',
The wee birds, a' sangless, are dowie and wae;
The green leaf is sear, an' the brown leaf is fa'in',
Wan Nature lamentin' o'er simmer's decay.

"How kin' should the heart be, aye warm an' forgi'en,
When sune, like a leaf, we maun a' fade awa';
When life's winter day as a shadow is fleein'—
But simmer aye shines whare nae autumn leaves fa'!"

Of other than weaver poets of Kilmarnock, the most notable are George Campbell, who composed as he laboured at the last, and ultimately came to publish sermons when he was a minister in Stockbridge; James Thomson, editor of the *Ayrshire Miscellany*, the first weekly publication of Kilmarnock; John Hyslop, the postman poet; and Alexander Smith, author of *A Life Drama* and *City Poems*, the most promising of the so-called "spasmodic" school. Smith was an apprentice to his father in pattern-designing when he wrote his *Life Drama*. His work won him fame and friends, and he was appointed secretary to the University of Edinburgh. There he wrote essays, collaborated with Sydney Dobell in a book of war sonnets, and experimented in fiction. The strain of all this literary work proved too much for him, and he died in 1867, in his thirty-seventh year.

It would be ungrateful if in this book, which owes so much to his *History of Ayrshire and its Families*, no mention were made of James Paterson, who was born in the farmhouse of Struthers, near Hurlford, in 1805. His industry

in collecting every conceivable kind of information about his native county was prodigious. His work was largely a labour of love, carried on while he was engaged in journalistic work in Kilmarnock, Ayr, Glasgow, and Edinburgh. The memoirs in *Kay's Edinburgh Portraits* were nearly all from his pen; he wrote the *Contemporaries of Burns;* he edited *The Songs and Ballads of Ayrshire*, and many other useful and interesting compilations. The county of Ayr owes him a debt of gratitude which it has not yet sufficiently acknowledged.

Visitors to Kilmarnock cannot fail to see the statue of Sir James Shaw, son of a Riccarton farmer, who rose to be Lord Mayor of London. As M'Kay says: "Proudly it stands in the midst of our spacious Cross, an ornament to the town, and an incentive to the youths who daily behold it, to imitate the various virtues of him it represents." They may probably have pointed out to them the Soulis Monument in the wall of the High Churchyard, commemorating some event which occurred so long ago that people have forgotten what it was. They will not omit a visit to the Kay Park, with its handsome monument to Burns, built of red sandstone from the quarries of Ballochmyle. From the summit of its Gothic tower they may survey the town and the whole valley of the Irvine from Loudoun Hill to the sea. Stevenson's statue of the poet, one of the best that has been executed, occupies the entrance; and the museum, which forms the base of the tower, contains a magnificent collection of manuscripts and other relics of Burns and his friends.

No doubt such monuments serve their purpose. The desire to honour the illustrious dead is laudable; and if the memorial be intrinsically beautiful, there is nothing to be said against it. Nevertheless, even such a monument as this in Kilmarnock, beautiful in itself, serving a useful purpose, and commemorating an association of supreme interest, lacks something which the rude, ivy-clad ruin that stands half a mile to the north of it possesses in common with every other actual relic of a bygone age. The grandest monument has no power of speech; the simplest relic has a thousand things to say to those whose ears are open to hear. That ivy-grown, weather-beaten ruin of Dean is indeed a memorial, in as far as it was a reward for brave deeds done by Boyds at Largs, at Loudoun, and at Bannockburn; but it has also a history of its own to tell. From the square tower which even an inexperienced eye can tell to be the oldest part of the building, Sir Robert Boyd rode out to meet Stewart of Darnley at the Thorn of Polmaise; and thither he returned elated with victory, the blood of his feudal foe staining his sword. Only a few days later he rode out again to meet the avengers of their chief; and ere night fell the tower received his lifeless clay. That is but one of the stories which the tower can tell. There was for nearly a century a blood feud between Boyds and Montgomeries. In 1484 the young Earl of Arran was treacherously slain by Lord Montgomerie; in 1523 the Boyds had their revenge; in 1547 Boyds and Montgomeries fought in the streets of Irvine; and peace was not declared until 1561. There was need

for walls to be thick and swords to be ready in those days. In the Castle of Dean the sister of James the Third of Scotland was kept "as in a free prison" until her banished husband died at Antwerp. In 1735 the castle was burned down, and the Lords of Kilmarnock thereafter lived in Kilmarnock House, which is now the industrial school in St Marnock Street.

Lord Kilmarnock joined Prince Charlie in the rebellion of 1745, and was taken prisoner at Culloden. Chambers tells how, "in the confusion of the flight, his hat had fallen from his head, and he was escorted bareheaded along the lines of the royal army. His eldest son, who was an ensign in the king's service at the same combat, with feelings of pity and affection beheld him in that condition; and, at the risk of incurring the displeasure of his fellow-officers, he flew from the ranks, and with his own hat covered the head of his unfortunate father from the storm." While her husband lay in the Tower awaiting death, Lady Kilmarnock loved to walk alone under the trees that skirted the stream below the town. Although streets have since grown up about it, the place still retains some of the beauty it had when it was part of the policies of Kilmarnock House, and its name, "The Lady's Walk," commemorates her who was wont to wander there and mourn her husband's fate.

CHAPTER XVI

IRVINE

"In many a way and vain essay,
I courted Fortune's favour;
Some cause unseen still stept between,
To frustrate each endeavour."

THE Irvine forms the natural northern boundary of the Burns country. It is true that there is much to tell of Cunninghames who sleep in the Glencairn aisle at Kilmaurs, and of Mures who dwelt at Rowallan on the banks of Carmel. It would be interesting to visit covenanting Fenwick and lone Lochgoin, the home of the Howies, and the hiding-place of many a hunted wanderer in the days when Dalziel's troops were quartered in Kilmarnock and in the Castle of Dean. Burns was familiar with those places. He rhymed his opinion of the road to Stewarton, where his "poor uncle Robert" lies in a nameless grave. He was a frequent guest at Dunlop House; and we hear of him at Kilbirnie fair; but these facts scarcely warrant the inclusion of Cunninghame in the country of Burns.

We cannot do better than follow in the footsteps of Johnson and Boswell. It will be remembered that, their Highland tour accom-

plished, the travellers came from Glasgow to Loudoun Castle, where the earl "jumped for joy" to see them. The shades of an October night were falling before they left the castle; otherwise they would surely have turned aside to view the charred ruins of Dean, the ancestral home of their gracious host at Slains.

They spent a quiet Sunday at Treesbank. Johnson had not the modern passion for sight-seeing; else Boswell, who boasted that the blood of Bruce ran in his veins, would probably have taken him to see what then was left of the Castle of Riccarton, in which Wallace found shelter with his uncle. Nothing remains of it now. Johnson, of course, "would not sanction, by his presence, a Presbyterian assembly"; but Boswell was a faithful churchgoer. Perhaps he accompanied his hostess, who was both his cousin and his sister-in-law, to the parish church of Riccarton, to hear Mr Alexander Moodie preach an evangelical sermon. One would give much to have Boswell's calm opinion of that worthy's powers, to set against the more vivid than refined description of his preaching in the "Holy Fair." Moodie was the "singet Sawney" of "The Kirk's Alarm" and one of the heroes of "The Twa Herds." There must have been a side to his nature which Burns did not see, if it be true that the quarrel between him and Russel arose through his love of a practical joke. Russel was no horseman; and as Moodie and he rode home together from a Presbytery dinner in Ayr, which was probably not a "teetotal function," Moodie amused himself by tickling his friend's horse, to the vast delight of chance wayfarers,

but to the intense discomfort of the rider. Russel, according to the story, never forgave Moodie's pleasantry.

On the Monday, Boswell with difficulty persuaded his companion to join him in a visit to Lady Eglinton at Auchans, an ancient house in which Wallaces and Cochranes had lived in turn. The last of the Wallaces of Auchans was that Colonel Wallace who led the rising which ended in the Battle of Rullion Green. The neighbouring Castle of Dundonald gave a title, though not a home, to the Cochranes. Indeed, they dismantled it to get material for the extension of Auchans. Now the ruined castle is all that Lord Dundonald possesses of the extensive Ayrshire lands his ancestors held. Many of the Cochranes have distinguished themselves in the service of their country. It is told on the tomb of the tenth earl, in Westminister Abbey, how he "achieved a name illustrious throughout the world for courage, patriotism, and chivalry"; and Britons will not soon forget him who led carabineers and composites into Ladysmith on the last day of February, 1900.

This is Boswell's account of their visit to the ruins:—"As we passed very near the castle of Dundonald, which was one of the many residences of the kings of Scotland, and in which Robert the Second lived and died, Dr Johnson wished to survey it particularly. It stands on a beautiful rising-ground, which is seen at a great distance on several quarters, and from whence there is an extensive prospect of the rich district of Cunninghame, the western sea, the isle of Arran, and a part of the northern coast of

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Ireland. It has long been unroofed, and though of considerable size, we could not, by any power of imagination, figure it as having been a suitable habitation for majesty. Dr Johnson, to irritate my old Scottish enthusiasm, was very jocular on the homely accommodation of 'King Bob,' and roared and laughed till the ruins echoed." The ancestors of "King Bob" thought more of security than of comfort when they built their castles.

Ruined and dismantled as Dundonald is, it bears signs of having been a place of great strength, and its very age makes it venerable. We need not press the point about a castle built of wood on this site in prehistoric days: it is enough that this was, in all probability, the first Scottish keep of the house of Stewart, who owned the lands of Kyle-Stewart long before the marriage of Walter the Steward and Marjory Bruce brought a Stewart to the throne.

Johnson was delighted with his visit to Auchans. Countess Susanna of Eglinton was then in her eighty-fifth year; but her heart was as young as it was when she was the reigning beauty of Edinburgh. The learned doctor had an intense desire to live long. Any reference to his death made him sulky, and any hint that he was still young put him in the best of spirits. Lady Eglinton was quite clever enough to discover this for herself. She flattered him by playfully adopting him as her son, claiming the right to do so, since she was married the year before he was born. "When we were going away," says Boswell, "she embraced him, saying, 'My dear son, farewell!' My friend was much

pleased with this day's entertainment, and owned that I had done well to force him out."

To Lady Eglinton Allan Ramsay dedicated *The Gentle Shepherd*, in a glowing eulogy, which was paraphrased by Hamilton of Bangour in such lines as these:

> "O Eglintoun! thy happy breast,
> Calm and serene enjoys the heavenly guest;
> From the tumultuous rule of passions freed,
> Pure in thy thought, and spotless in thy deed;
> In virtues rich, in goodness unconfin'd,
> Thou shin'st a fair example to thy kind."

Here we must part company with Boswell and Johnson. They returned to Kilmarnock, and thence next day set out for Auchinleck. Our way lies towards Irvine, but, before we proceed, let us take our stand on one of the Dundonald heights, and survey a part of the country which we have not yet visited. The flat coast of Kyle from Ayr to Irvine lies before us, its plainness relieved by the glorious background of the dark Arran hills. It is now given over to golfers and summer visitors, who throng to Troon and the old town of Prestwick, the freemen of which enjoy peculiar privileges, dating from the twelfth century. Many memories of bygone days cling round it. A little to the south stood the hospital of Kingcase, said to have been built by Robert Bruce in gratitude for the healing effect of the waters of the well beside it. In the ruined church of Monkton, Wallace saw the vision of Saint Andrew, and was warned to avoid the Fatal Assize at Ayr. At least, so says Blind Harry. Among the sandy knolls on the Prestwick shore Lord Cassillis was waylaid and murdered by the

Campbells of Loudoun. The Burns associations are but few. It is perhaps worth mentioning that the poet's nephew was one of the successors of Dr Andrew Mitchell in the church of Monkton. Dr Thomas Burns "came out" at the Disruption of 1843, and formed the Free Church congregation in Prestwick. In 1847 he went to New Zealand, where he did a great deal of excellent work for church and school. Dr Mitchell was one of the opponents of M'Gill of Ayr, and was therefore duly pilloried in "The Kirk's Alarm":

"Andro Gowk! Andro Gowk!
Ye may slander the Book,
And the Book not the waur, let me tell ye;
Ye are rich and look big,
But lay by hat and wig,
And ye 'll hae a calf's head o' sma' value."

Two places within our view are celebrated in "The Vision." The first is Orangefield, "a pleasant spot near sandy wilds," the home of Burns's masonic friend, James Dalrymple, to whom he owed his introduction to Lord Glencairn. Strangely enough, Burns was also acquainted with the family who possessed Orangefield before the Dalrymples. It was Lesley Baillie, a daughter of this house, of whom he sang:

"O saw ye bonnie Lesley,
As she gaed o'er the Border?
She 's gane, like Alexander,
To spread her conquests farther."

Fullarton House, beautifully situated among noble trees in the neighbourhood of Troon, was the residence of "Fullarton, the brave and

young," "Brydone's brave ward" of "The Vision." Colonel Fullarton is remembered, not only for the brilliancy of his services in India, but also for *A General View of the Agriculture in the County of Ayr*, a work which did something to hasten the improvements which have been effected in the county since its publication in 1793. Commendations of Burns's skill as a farmer are so few that one is glad to note that, in this work, Colonel Fullarton acknowledges indebtedness for a method of dishorning cattle to "Mr Robert Burns, whose general talents are no less conspicuous than the poetic powers which have done so much honour to the country of his birth."

It is somewhat remarkable that Ayrshire, which has produced men of mark in almost every line of human activity—men of letters, like Burns, Boswell, and Galt; pioneers of industry, like Dale, Shaw, Tennant, and Allan; divines, like Zachary Boyd, Blair, MacKnight, and Fisher; soldiers and statesmen, like the Kennedys and the Dalrymples—is comparatively unknown in the world of graphic art. It is true that Thomson of Duddingston was born in the manse of Dailly, that John Wilson of Ayr painted meritorious seascapes, and that Kilmarnock boasted a small school, which included the Tannocks, and Hunter, the Kilmarnock cobbler. Hunter's is an interesting figure. Born in the little village of Symington, he was trained as a shoemaker in Dundonald; but his talent asserted itself, and he soon became known as "the artist-cobbler." Finally he removed to Glasgow and devoted himself to portrait-painting. He showed that he had a taste for letters as well as for painting: his

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Retrospect of an Artist's Life is a delightful book.

The founders of the "Allan Line" of steamers are said to be descendants of one James Allan, a carpenter on the estate of Fairlie, which lies to the north of our vantage-ground on the Dundonald Hills. This is a fact particularly interesting to Burns students. The wife of James Allan was a Brown of Craigenton, sister or half-sister of the poet's mother. It is usual to allow that Burns had a remarkable father, but this seems to strengthen the argument that he was no less fortunate in his mother. At any rate, it appears that they were no ordinary men and women whose graves we saw in the churchyard of Kirkoswald. The fact that William Burnes began his Ayrshire life as gardener in Fairlie, gives the place an interest which is enhanced when we recall that Burns found shelter with James Allan during that wretched time immediately preceding the issue of the Kilmarnock edition, when he believed that Jean Armour's father had procured a warrant for his arrest.

Burns could not look back upon that chapter of his life's history with any pleasure. Nor could he have much satisfaction in the recollection of his other experience in this corner of the country. His attempt to learn flax-dressing in Irvine was, as he said, "a sadly unlucky affair." It was not only that he was unfortunate in his partner, that he failed in his business, and that while he and his friends "were giving a welcome carousal to the New Year" his shop was burned down, and he "was left, like a true poet, without

a sixpence." These were serious enough misfortunes; but their bearing on Burns's future was comparatively insignificant. The nine months which he spent in Irvine are important, not because of any effect they had on his worldly circumstances, but because of their effect on the man himself. It is foolish to blame either Irvine or Richard Brown. The evil lay in Burns himself and in his training. True, his training was excellent as far as it went, but through it all he was fettered, bound by the iron chains of dire necessity to a continual, hopeless, cheerless struggle with poverty. He was human: it is his humanity which has endeared him to his countrymen; and sooner or later he was bound to exult unduly in his freedom from restraint. He found his opportunity at Irvine—not much of an opportunity for exultation, indeed; but, such as it was, he seized it. His studies were limited to a daily perusal of the ballad sheets which hung in Templeton's shop in the High Street; any poems that can be assigned to the Irvine period were the fruits of that melancholy which may have been the outward sign of an inward struggle. The facts of his Irvine life are somewhat obscure, but the following account, which attempts to reconcile Burns's own statements with well-founded local tradition, cannot be far from accurate.

Burns's arrangement to go to Irvine was made while he still hoped to make Ellison Begbie his wife. Her rejection of his suit did not lead him to abandon the enterprise, although it probably caused him to enter upon it in a half-hearted fashion. At that time Irvine was a

larger town than Ayr. A century before, it had ranked third among Scottish seaports, and its trade was still considerable. It contained many small flax-dressing establishments or "heckling-shops," in one of which Burns began work with Peacock, the "scoundrel of the first water, who made money by the mystery of Thieving." Peacock's "heckling-shop" still stands in the Glasgow Vennel, a narrow lane off the High Street. Only two years ago its roof of thatch was removed, and it is now an out-house of unprepossessing aspect. In the same lane there is pointed out the house in which Burns is said to have lodged, proof being furnished by the initials R. B., and the date 1782, cut in the kitchen mantelpiece. He lived in the plainest style, occupying a single room, and attending to his own wants. After his quarrel with Peacock, Burns set up in business in High Street, either on his own account or along with a partner. His shop was burned down on New Year's Day (1782); but he found employment in Irvine until the month of March, when he returned to Lochlea. His association with the burgh has been commemorated by a statue on the town common, unveiled in 1896. The occasion was made memorable by the presence of the Poet Laureate, Sir Alfred Austin, who delivered an address.

Irvine is a flourishing town with extensive chemical works, and considerable shipbuilding and engineering industries. It is old enough to dispute the seniority of Ayr as a royal burgh, and there are evidences of its antiquity in the ruined castles of Seagate and Stane, the former

of which is probably the Castle of Irvine mentioned by Howden as an important place in the twelfth century. The associations of the town, however, are literary rather than historical. In it John Galt was born in 1779, and, although he went to reside in Greenock while he was still a child, he maintained a close connection with Irvine all through his busy career. His life in Greenock; his struggle in London, whither he went in 1804, with the manuscript of *The Battle of Largs* in his pocket; his travels in southern Europe; and his ill-requited work in Canada—these do not concern us here any more than does the great bulk of his literary work—the biographies, the dramas, the novels, the books of travel, and the vast amount of miscellaneous writing which bears witness to his industry and his versatility. Galt had wandered far and written much before he found in his native Ayrshire the materials wherewith to construct the works on which his fame now rests. "When very young," he says, "I wished to write a book that would be for Scotland what the *Vicar of Wakefield* is for England." The *Annals of the Parish* was his attempt to realise this ambition; but it was written before *Waverley* created a demand for the Scottish novel, and the publishers fought shy of it. Galt, therefore, threw it aside until the success of his *Ayrshire Legatees* induced him to bring forth the *Annals* and to follow it up by a series of delineations of Scottish life, of which the best are *The Provost* and *The Entail*. *The Entail* had the rare distinction of having been thrice read through by Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron. The value and the charm

of his work lie in the pictures he presents of Ayrshire village and burghal life. There is no exaggeration either of sentiment or of spleen; there is abundant humour, but it is always fresh and natural; best of all, there is no attempt at cleverness. The *Annals* might be an actual record. The simple, kindly, observant Micah Balwhidder, who writes the chronicles of Dalmailing, is not unworthy to stand beside Dr Primrose himself. He has no great events or striking incidents to narrate; but he faithfully follows the development of his Ayrshire village during the last forty years of the eighteenth century. Nothing escapes him. He bemoans the prevalence of smuggling; he is troubled about the increase in tea-drinking almost as much as about the establishment of a distillery in the parish; he notes with anxiety the changed manners that come in with increased prosperity; and through it all he reveals how his kindliness and simplicity won the affections of his folk, although they stood out against him at first because he was a patron's man. Here is a characteristic passage from the *Annals*:—"Among other ways that Colin (a lad whom Mr Balwhidder had taken by the hand) had of spending his leisure, was that of playing music on an instrument, in which it was said he made a wonderful proficiency; but being long and thin, and of a delicate habit of body, he was obligated to refrain from this recreation; so he betook himself to books, and from reading he began to try writing; but, as this was done in a corner, nobody jaloused what he was about, till one evening in this year he came to the manse, and

asked a word in private with me. I thought that perhaps he had fallen in with a lass, and was come to consult me anent matrimony; but when we were by ourselves, in my study, he took out of his pocket a number of the *Scots Magazine*, and said, 'Sir, you have been long pleased to notice me more than any other body, and when I got this, I could not refrain from bringing it, to let you see't. Ye maun ken, sir, that I have been long in secret given to trying my hand at rhyme; and wishing to ascertain what others thought of my power in that way, I sent by the post twa three verses to the *Scots Magazine*, and they have not only inserted them, but placed them in the body of the book, in such a way that I kenna what to think.' So I looked at the *Magazine*, and read his verses, which were certainly very well-made verses for one who had no regular education. But I said to him, as the Greenock magistrates said to John Wilson, the author of Clyde, when they stipulated with him to give up the art, that poem-making was a profane and unprofitable trade, and he would do well to turn his talent to something of more solidity, which he promised to do; but he has since put out a book, whereby he has angered all those that had foretold he would be a do-nae-gude. Thus has our parish walked sidy for sidy with all the national improvements, having an author of its own, and getting a literary character in the ancient and famous republic of letters."

Galt does not ignore the petty jealousy that characterises all villages. It is hinted at in the above passage, but it is not allowed to discolour every page. Even Miss Betty Gliblans—although

Miss Mally Glencairn spoke truth when she whispered, "Oh, ye're a spiteful deevil!"—is kept within reasonable bounds. Mr Pringle is not really sarcastic when he writes: "I was concerned to hear of poor Mr Witherspoon's accident, in falling from his horse in coming from the Dalmailing occasion. How thankful he must be, that the Lord made his head of a durability to withstand the shock, which might otherwise have fractured his skull!" There is no affectation of kindheartedness when he sends Mr Micklewham ten pounds to "divide after the following manner:—"You will give to auld Mizy Eccles ten shillings. She's a careful creature, and it will go as far with her thrift as twenty will do with Effy Hopkirk; so you will give Effy twenty. Mrs Binnacle, who lost her husband, the sailor, last winter, is, I am sure, with her two sickly bairns, very ill off. I would, therefore, like if you will lend her a note, and ye may put half-a-crown in the hand of each of the poor weans for a playock, for she's a proud spirit, and will bear much before she complain. Thomas Dowy has been long unable to do a turn of work, so you may give him a note too. I promised that donsie body, Willy Shackle, the betheral, that when I got my legacy, he should get a guinea, which would be more to him than if the Colonel had died at home, and he had had the howking of his grave; you may, therefore, in the meantime, give Willy a crown, and be sure to warn him well no to get fou with it, for I'll be very angry if he does. But what in this matter will need all your skill, is the giving of the remaining five pounds to auld Miss Betty Peerie; being a

gentlewoman both by blood and education, she's a very slimmer affair to handle in a doing of this kind. But I am persuaded she's in as great necessity as many that seem far poorer, especially since the muslin flowering has gone so down. Her bits of brats are sairly worn, though she keeps out an apparition of gentility."

It is given to few men to accomplish so much as Galt did; yet in a sense his career was disappointing. His love of distinction and his ambition to excel in every line of life led to a woeful dissipation of energy. Had his abundant talents been directed to one definite end, they would undoubtedly have brought him success. As it was, his latter days were clouded by misfortune and disappointment, and of all the sixty volumes which he penned, only the simple tales of Ayrshire life seem fated to survive. He died at Greenock in 1839.

Galt, in his autobiography, tells that he had a vivid recollection of the exodus of the Buchanites from Irvine, and of being drawn back "by the lug and the horn" from following the poor wretches as they went forth "singing psalms and shouting that they were going to the New Jerusalem." In a letter to his cousin in Montrose (1784), Burns gave an account of this deluded sect, and added that he was personally acquainted with most of them. Indeed, some evidence has been adduced to prove that the "darling Jean" of the "Epistle to Davie" was one Jean Gardner, a good-looking follower of Mrs Buchan, for whom he had a passing fancy. One need scarcely say that the evidence is of the flimsiest character. "Luckie" Buchan, as she was familiarly called,

was the daughter of a Banffshire tavern-keeper. In Glasgow she happened to hear the Rev. Hugh Whyte, the Relief minister of Irvine, preach, and she so wrought upon the simple man's vanity that he invited her to take up her abode with him in Irvine. There she put forward the most impudent and audacious claims. She was the third person in the Godhead; those on whom she breathed had immortality conferred upon them; and all who followed her would be translated to heaven without tasting death. She and her followers became so great a nuisance in the town that they were finally expelled by the magistrates, and to the number of forty-six they made their way to Dumfriesshire, where they set up a common habitation on the farm of Cample, near Closeburn. There they waited for the day of their glorious ascent, which Friend Mother declared to be fast approaching. Mr Whyte wrote them doggerel hymns, which they sang with great enthusiasm to the tune of "The beds of sweet Roses." At last the eventful day arrived. The scene has been thus described: "On a particular height three platforms were erected, as if so many springboards, for the more distinguished of the body, the centre one being several feet higher than the others, and allotted to the special use of Mrs Buchan, so that she might gain a somewhat earlier ascent, leading the way, and the flock following in promiscuous order. The whole fraternity, in full expectation of immediate ascent, had had their heads closely shaved, with the exception of a little tuft at the top by which the angels might grasp them and waft them to glory All were in readiness by an

early hour, the platforms were occupied, and the sound of hymn-singing in all its ecstasy rose and floated far away among the hills. A slight breeze sprang up, and this was construed as heralding the angelic approach, the cause being the action of celestial wings through the air. All at once a sudden blast swept over the scene, the platforms, with their occupants, were violently overturned, and an ignominious fall put an end to the ascension." After this Mrs Buchan's influence declined, but some professed belief in her until her death in 1791, and one of her followers, from whom Joseph Train had much of the information which he embodied in *The Buchanites from First to Last*, remained faithful to her memory, and was buried beside her in the kailyard at Auchengibbert farm in 1848.

Few towns of the same size can show such a roll of illustrious names as that which belongs to Irvine. It has sent forth such soldiers as Sir Patrick Montgomerie, and Sir Robert Boyd, the defender of Gibraltar in 1782. Its divines have included such men as James M'Knight, and Robert Blair, the Covenanter, grandfather of the author of "The Grave." John Strang, a sixteenth century Principal of Glasgow University, was born in Irvine; David Dickson, poet and hymn-writer, was minister of the parish before he became Professor of Divinity in Edinburgh; his son, Alexander, who was born in Irvine in 1621, was also an Edinburgh professor; Dr William Jack, who exchanged the editorial chair of the *Glasgow Herald* for that of Mathematics in Gilmorehill, was a pupil of Irvine Academy; so was his brother, Dr R. Logan

Jack, geologist and explorer, whose recent adventures in the far west of the Chinese empire are graphically told in *The Back Blocks of China.* The founder of the Ferguson scholarships, the highest honours open to a Scottish student, was an Irvine man. The statue to Lord Justice Boyle bears witness to the pride with which Irvine remembers that it gave a distinguished president to the Court of Session. Mrs Lewis and Mrs Gibson, whose discovery of the Syriac Gospel in the monastery of Sinai has added to the fame which their writings had already won, are daughters of an Irvine solicitor.

At the head of its school of local bards stands George Paulin, for thirty-three years rector of the Academy, not unworthy of his title, "the Whittier of Scotland." In the Free Church manse, in the old Kirkgate, Mrs Cousins wrote that beautiful hymn suggested by the last words of Samuel Rutherford, "The sands of time are sinking." On the minor poets of Ayr the influence of Burns is supreme; it has never been disowned by the rhymesters of Kilmarnock; but the Irvine poets have been faithful to the tradition founded by David Dickson, and continued by James Montgomery, the Christian poet. David Raeside, Robert Gemmell, Dr W. B. Robertson, John Dickie, and the Rev. James Ballantine, were all hymn-writers, and the Rev. W. B. R. Wilson follows in their footsteps.

Montgomery was born in Irvine in 1771, and spent the first four years and a half of his life there. His parents sacrificed their lives to the missionary cause in the West Indies, and the boy

had a lonely, hard upbringing. After ten years at a Moravian school near Leeds, he was apprenticed to a grocer; but he ran off with a few shillings in his pocket, and eventually found his way to London, where he tried in vain to find a publisher for his poems. For thirty years he edited the *Sheffield Iris*, and twice he suffered imprisonment for the free expression of his opinions. "The Wanderer of Switzerland" first brought him into notice. It was, of course, condemned by the *Edinburgh Review*. Perhaps on that account, its author is often confused with "Satan" Montgomery, the victim of Macaulay's famous example of merciless satire. Though Irvine was Montgomery's birthplace, his associations with it were but slight, and more than half a century passed ere he visited it again. His longer poems have been forgotten, but the best of his hymns and of such shorter pieces as "There is a Land of every land the Pride," are still well known. We give some stanzas of a Burns anniversary song from his pen:

"What bird in beauty, flight, or song,
Can with the bard compare,
Who sang as sweet, and soar'd as strong
As ever child of air?

"He was the wren amidst the grove,
When in his homely vein;
At Bannockburn, the bird of Jove,
With thunder in his train.

"The woodlark, in his mournful hours;
The goldfinch in his mirth;
The thrush, a spendthrift of his powers,
Enrapturing heaven and earth.

RIVER AFTON. *Page* 245.

"The linnet in simplicity ;
In tenderness the dove ;
But, more than all beside, was he
The nightingale, in love.

"Peace to the dead ! In Scotia's choir
Of minstrels, great and small,
He sprang from his spontaneous fire,
The Phœnix of them all !"

CHAPTER XVII

ADOWN WINDING NITH

"How lovely, Nith, thy fruitful vales,
Where spreading hawthorns gaily bloom!
How sweetly wind thy sloping dales,
Where lambkins wanton thro' the broom!"

SINCE Hew Ainslie made his pilgrimage in 1820, Kyle and Carrick have appropriated the title of "The Land of Burns." Inasmuch as they contain within their borders the place of his birth, the homes of his boyhood and early manhood, the scenes of his first achievements, and the sources of his first inspiration, no one will dispute their claim to the title. At the same time, it would be absurd to exclude Nithsdale from the land of Burns. It was his adopted country. There he spent eight of the most momentous years of his life, the happy years at Ellisland and the clouded years in Dumfries; there much of his best work was done; there, too, death found him; and there his dust is mingled with the earth.

As a matter of fact, Burns knew the Nith from source to sea better than he knew any of the Ayrshire streams. His acquaintance with the upper reaches of the Ayr and the Doon was but

slight; he touched the Girvan, the Lugar, the Cessnock, and the Irvine, only at places here and there; but he was perfectly familiar with every bend and stretch of the Nith from New Cumnock to the Solway. How well he knew even its tributaries, is proved by the perfect accuracy with which he describes the Afton in the song which we now know to have been written as a compliment to the stream itself. "There is," he says in a letter to Mrs Dunlop, published by Dr Wallace in 1898, "a small river, Afton, that falls into Nith, near New Cumnock, which has some charming, wild, romantic scenery on its banks. I have a particular pleasure in those little pieces of poetry such as our Scots songs, etc., where the names and landskip-features of rivers, lakes, or woodlands, that one knows, are introduced. I attempted a compliment of that kind, to Afton, as follows:—

> Flow gently, clear Afton, among thy green braes,
> And grateful I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
> My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
> Flow gently, clear Afton, disturb not her dream."

One regrets that Burns did not retain the epithet "clear": it is peculiarly applicable to the Afton, flowing in a silver stream over the pebbles in its bed. The beauties of the song are really the beauties of the river. Away to the south tower the "lofty, neighbouring hills, far-mark'd with the courses of clear-winding rills," the hills over which Wallace and Bruce wandered; the "green-crested plover" still screams in the moorlands; the "green braes" still rise from the margin of the stream; blackbirds still sing in the wild, thorny dens; here and there along the

"pleasant banks" are still clumps of "sweet-scented birks" and "primrose-decked woodlands"; and a ruined cottage close by the stream may well have been the identical "Mary's sweet cot" of the song. This accuracy strengthens the Cumnock tradition that the song was written on the spot. Burns undoubtedly did spend an occasional night at New Cumnock on his way between Ellisland and Mauchline; and it was his custom to visit Laight, a farmhouse on the Afton, about half a mile from the village, where lived John Logan, the "Afton's Laird" of "The Kirk's Alarm," in which James Young, the minister of New Cumnock, appears under the disguise of "Jamie Goose." The story goes that, one evening, after his return from Laight to his inn at Cumnock, the poet refused to join the party which his worthy landlady, with an eye to business, had invited to meet him, but called for writing material and retired to his room. In the morning he sent the poem now known as "Sweet Afton" to his friends at Laight. John Logan had five daughters; but not one of them was named Mary. The name was probably introduced *euphoniæ gratia.*

One looks in vain for the slightest trace of the castle in which, according to Blind Harry, Wallace spent three months "in gud rest":

> "At the Blak Rok, quhar he was wont to be;
> Apon that sted a ryall hous held he."

It is probably to be identified with the Castle of Blackcraig, a seat of the Dunbars of Mochrum, which stood upon the knoll on which the oldest part of the village was built.

SANQUHAR CASTLE. *Page* 252.

From Cumnock to Sanquhar the river is dull, the road is hilly, and the railway is convenient. It runs parallel to the road and the river under the shadow of Corsancone, which Burns could see before him as he rode up Nithside on his way to Ayrshire, singing to his wife in Mauchline:

> "But Nith maun be my Muse's well,
> My Muse maun be thy bonnie sell,
> On Corsincon I'll glow'r and spell,
> And write how dear I love thee!"

The village of Kirkconnel which we pass is not that of the ballad of "fair Helen," the scene of which is laid on the Kirtle, in the south-east of Dumfriesshire. It may be noted, however, that this Kirkconnel was the birthplace of Mr Alexander Anderson ("Surfaceman"), whose children's songs, such as "Cuddle Doon," will keep him in remembrance when his sonnets are forgotten.

Sanquhar strikes the visitor as a sleepy town resting upon its laurels. It is a place of unknown antiquity. It was probably the Corda, which was one of the four towns assigned by Ptolemy to the Selgovæ; it is thought also to be the Caer Rwyg of Taliessin's poems; at any rate, its name (sean cathair), meaning an old fortress, indicates that its strength was of old standing even in Gaelic times. It has memories of Wallace and the struggle for Scottish freedom; it gave shelter to the unfortunate Mary Stuart as she fled from Langside to Dundrennan; it was the capital of the covenanting country, the scene of Cameron's and of Renwick's formal renunciation of allegiance to the Stuarts; it had some acquaintance with

Prince Charlie's Highlandmen in 1745. The associations with Burns are of considerable interest. It was from the fireside of the comfortable parlour of the Queensberry Arms that he had to set out to make room for the funeral party of Mrs Oswald, on that stormy night when he composed the ode which, according to Carlyle, "might have been chanted by the Furies of Æschylus." Mrs Dunlop criticised from another point of view, when she said: "Are you not a sad, wicked creature to send a poor old wife straight to the Devil because she gave you a ride on a cold night?" Burns spent many a jolly night in the Queensberry Arms. Edward Whigham, the landlord, was a man after the poet's own heart, ready and able to help him to hunt out an old ballad or tune. Burns presented him with a copy of his poems, which is still preserved in Sanquhar; and on the window of the breakfast-room of the hotel he wrote the lines:

> "Envy, if thy jaundiced eye
> Through this window chance to pry,
> To thy sorrow thou shalt find
> All that 's generous, all that 's kind,
> Friendship, virtue, every grace,
> Dwelling in this happy place."

The window-pane has been removed, but it is, we believe, still in the possession of the proprietors of the hotel. Other Sanquhar friends of Burns were, John Rigg of Crawick Forge, which is still in the hands of his descendants; Robert Whigham, for sixteen years provost of the burgh; Barker, the proprietor of the Sanquhar coal-mines; and "that trusty auld worthy," William Johnson of Clackleith, whose son was

alive in 1880, after having served under Nelson at Trafalgar. He wrote a poem on "Lord Nelson," which was published in 1874, with a sketch of the author's life by Mr A. B. Todd.

Burns's official duties brought him frequently to Sanquhar. The popular mind saw no crime in cheating the Revenue; and opportunities were abundant when even such necessaries of life as salt, soap, starch, and candles, to say nothing of tea, coffee, paper, and printed goods, as well as spirits and tobacco, were subject to excise duties. There was, therefore, need for vigilance on the part of the exciseman. Take this record of one day's work done by Burns while he acted as supervisor in 1795. It is detailed on a page of his official diary, which is reproduced in a booklet (published January 1904) by Mr Tom Wilson, Sanquhar. On February 23, Burns left Thornhill at five o'clock in the morning; rode four miles to Enterkinfoot, where he made one call; thence three miles to Slunkford, where he made another call; thence six miles to Sanquhar, where he paid twenty official visits; thence two miles to Whitehall, where he made two calls; and the return journey to Sanquhar completed his day's work at seven o'clock in the evening. Is it wonderful that he confined his poetic efforts to jotting down a stanza or two he had composed by the way, and left the task of essaying some great work to the time he hoped to see when he would have the greater responsibility and the more abundant leisure of a collectorship? He would attend, as a matter of course, the three great fairs of Sanquhar—the Feeing Fair at Candlemas, the Wool Fair in July, and the

Onion Fair at Martinmas—at which it was necessary to have an eye on the many stall-holders who offered small ale and porter to the thirsty fair-goers, with a dash of something stronger if the gauger was not on the scene.

It was Burns the exciseman, not Burns the poet, who knew Sanquhar, and therefore one does not expect to find it in his songs.

In his sole poetic mention of Sanquhar, as one of the "five carlins"—

> "Black Joan, frae Crichton Peel,
> A carlin stoor and grim"—

he is much more complimentary than was Scott, who makes Dandie Dinmont say of Mrs MacGuffog's "clean sheets" at Portanferry, "'Od, this bed looks as if a' the colliers in Sanquhar had been in't thegither." Let the visitor be warned against any story he may hear concerning the medallion bust of the poet that appears on the wall of a house opposite the quaint, old-fashioned town-house which looks down the High Street. The house with the medallion is old enough—it was the prison of Lord Kilmarnock for a night after his capture in 1746, but it has no connection with Burns. The present writer interviewed the man who was responsible for the bust, which is unmistakably a representation of Burns, and got this account of its erection. "Weel, ye see, a man up at the brickworks got an order for ane o' thae things, so he made twa; an' says he tae me: 'Ye're a great Burns man, ye should stick this up on the wa' o' yer hoose.' Weel, I kent it was an' auld hoose, and some gret folk hae been conneckit wi 't,

an' he wisna wantin' mickle for't, sae I jist pit it up, an' mony a ane has stoppit an' glowr'd at it, I can tell ye." It is thus that legends are made.

Besides Johnson, the veteran of Trafalgar, who is the local poet of Sanquhar, and James Hislop, the author of "The Cameronian's Dream," who was born in Crawick Glen, about two miles from the town, Sanquhar claims at least one other poet, Mr James H. Stoddart, a former editor of the *Glasgow Herald*, whose *Village Life*, with its pictures of the beadle, the blacksmith, the doctor, and the old schoolmaster, is, we suppose, based on his recollections of his native town. Coming from the station towards the High Street, one is reminded by the monument in front of the church on the left, that Dr Robert Simpson, author of *Traditions of the Covenanters*, was a Sanquhar minister for eight-and-forty years. Near the other end of the long street there stands, on the site of the old town cross, a granite monument bearing the inscription:

"In Commemoration of
The Two Famous
SANQUHAR DECLARATIONS,
which were published
On this spot, where stood
The Ancient Cross of the Burgh:
The one by
The Rev. RICHARD CAMERON,
on the 22nd of June 1680;
The other by
The Rev. JAMES RENWICK,
on the 25th of May 1685,
The Killing Time.

"If you would know the nature of their crime,
Then read the story of that killing time."

We have already described Cameron's fate. Renwick's is as interesting a story. Born in Nithsdale in 1662, he saw Cargill's death in Edinburgh in 1681, and he resolved to follow in that martyr's footsteps. After two years' training in Holland, he returned to Scotland, and took his place as the most popular conventicle preacher. In May 1685, he rode into Sanquhar with two hundred men, and affixed to the Market Cross a declaration disowning James Stuart, just as Richard Cameron had disowned his predecessor. He had many wonderful escapes, but at last he was taken in Edinburgh in 1687, and in the spring of the next year he won the death he had almost seemed to court. He was but twenty-six years of age: "none more comely in features, none more prudent, none more heroic in spirit, yet none more meek, more humane and condescending. . . . He learned the truth and counted the cost, and so sealed it with his blood."

The venerable ruins of Crichton Peel stand at the south end of the town, on a green knoll, at the base of which the Nith once flowed, although its course is now half a mile to the south. This home of the Douglases was a strong, square building, with towers at its four corners, one of which is still fairly complete. Like many another ancient castle, it served as a quarry for the neighbourhood until the late Lord Bute, with that care of all historical buildings which won the gratitude of every archæologist, built up the broken corners and stopped the demolition. As has already been said, it is impossible to tell when the first castle of Sanquhar was built.

Like every other Scottish fortress, it was held by the English after the abdication of John Balliol. Blind Harry gives an account of its capture by Sir William Douglas in the days of Wallace. A man, named Anderson, was in the habit of carrying fuel to the castle. One morning, Dickson of Hazelside, a retainer of Douglas, took Anderson's place. Day was just breaking over the Lowther hills when he led the rude sledge laden with wood to the castle gate. Grumbling at being disturbed so early, the porter raised the portcullis and allowed the supposed woodman to enter. As soon as the sledge was within the gate, Dickson unfastened the load so that the portcullis could not be lowered. Two blows from his knife prevented the porter's interference, and Dickson then signalled to Douglas and his men, who were hiding close by, that the way was clear. Governor and garrison were put to the sword, and Douglas held the castle. There, says Blind Harry, he was besieged by Clifford and St John; but Wallace hastened to his relief, raised the siege, and drove the English before him as far as Cockpool on the Solway.

Looking south from the castle, we can see the chimneys of Eliock House showing above the trees. There the far-famed "Admirable" Crichton was born, in 1560. At fifteen, this remarkable man was a graduate of St Andrews. While he was still in his teens, he astonished Paris as much by his sword-play as by his learning. The stories that are told of his astounding versatility are almost incredible. He was scholar, poet, orator, and swordsman,

ready to meet any one on any ground, to fight a duel, to compose a Latin ode, to supply the place of a whole troop of players, or to prove that Aristotle did not know his business. Most astonishing of all, is the fact that he was but twenty-two when he perished at the hands of his pupil, the heir to the dukedom of Mantua. Pupil and tutor, says the story, loved the same fair Mantuan. One evening, as Crichton was on his way to visit the lady, he was attacked by three masquers. He held his ground against them valiantly, and pressed one of them so hard that, to save his life, the pupil unmasked. Crichton knelt for pardon, presenting his sword hilt to the young prince; but jealousy is unforgiving, and the prince ran him through the body.

The way from Sanquhar to Thornhill runs alongside the Nith, through the middle of the Southern Highlands. There is scarcely a finer cycle run in Scotland. As we descend the valley, the solemn, round-backed, green hills press closer and closer together, rising step by step on the one side to the gloomy peaks of Lowther, and on the other to the distant grey hills of Galloway. The river is seldom out of sight; now brawling in a rocky channel close by the road, then sweeping in beautiful reaches under overhanging trees. In spring the woods are gay with hyacinths and primroses, and in summer the air is heavy with the scent of meadow-sweet. The woods of Drumlanrig have not yet regained the full glory which they lost when "old Q." cut down the finest of their trees; but the banks of Nith are for the most part well wooded still, and "the

genius of the stream" has yearly less cause to regret the time

> "Ye might hae seen me in my pride;
> When a' my banks sae bravely saw
> Their woody pictures in my tide;
> When hanging beech and spreading elm
> Shaded my streams sae clear and cool;
> And stately oaks their twisted arms
> Threw broad and dark across the pool."

The temptation is great to follow the Wordsworths and Coleridge up the steep Menock pass to Wanlockhead, the highest village in the south of Scotland, where Burns went once at least, and rewarded the smith who sharpened his horse's shoes with a song and a dram, as well as with good sterling coin. It is but a mile or two farther to Leadhills, the birthplace of Allan Ramsay, although to visit it entails the crossing of the border into Lanarkshire. The strong pedestrian should cross the hills and descend to Nith again by the famous Enterkin path. He will not forget or regret his first view of the wild pass which won from the author of *Rab and his Friends* such praise as this: "We have seen many of our most remarkable glens and mountain gorges—Glencorse and Glencoe, Glen Nevis (the noblest of them all), the Sma' Glen, Wordsworth's Glen Almain (Glenalmond)—where Ossian sleeps—the lower part of Glen Lyon, and many others of all kinds of sublimity and beauty; but we know nothing more noticeable, more unlike any other place, more impressive, than this short, deep, narrow, and sudden glen. 'Commodore Rogers' would feel quite at home here; we all know his merits:—

'Commodore Rogers was a man—exceedingly brave—
particular;
He climbed up very high rocks—exceedingly high—
perpendicular;
And what made this more inexpressible,
These same rocks were quite inaccessible.'"

Readers of Defoe's *Memoirs of the Church of Scotland*, will remember his thrilling account of the rescue of the Covenanters in this narrow pass—the straggling line of soldiers and prisoners in single file, the sudden call through the mist, "Sir, will ye deliver our minister?" the answer, "No, sir, an' ye were to be damned," of the officer, the bullet that pierced his head, and the picture of the horse, "fluttering a little with the fall of his rider," rolling over the precipice, to be dashed to pieces ere he reached the bottom.

Another pass leads through the Lowther Hills from Nithsdale to Clydesdale. It is Dalveen, the "lang glen" down which "the braw wooer" came to "deave" the maiden with his love, and it has covenanting memories. The Carron Water which flows down the pass has, like some other places in Nithsdale, a shadowy connection with the story of Arthur. It is supposed to be the stream mentioned in the *Book of Taliessin* as the boundary of Garant. In the Church of Durrisdeer the Douglases of Drumlanrig were buried, and now and then a visitor turns aside to see the marble effigies of the "Union" Duke of Queensberry and the Duchess.

One would fain linger in this beautiful and interesting district to look for the sites of castles stormed by Wallace, to explore the ruins of the ancient castle of Morton, once held by Randolph,

Earl of Moray, to wander through the park where the fierce, white cattle, "mightiest of all the beasts of chase that roam in woody Caledon," used to herd, and to learn all that might be told of Drumlanrig, that magnificent pile which cost its builder so dear that he wrote on the accounts: "The deil pyke out his een that looks on thir." Drumlanrig has many literary associations. John Gay, of *Beggar's Opera* fame, found a home there with the third Duke and his clever, beautiful, eccentric wife, the "Kitty, beautiful and young" of Prior, and "the idol of the poets." Scott was an occasional guest at Drumlanrig, and Lockhart tells how bravely he concealed from his host and his fellow guests the terrible anxiety which the news of Ballantyne's financial troubles brought him. Smollett praised the magnificent woods; Wordsworth and Burns lamented their loss; Carlyle and his wife drove often through the grounds. Burns bitterly hated the Duke of Queensberry of his time, the notorious "old Q.," the "discarded remnant of a race once great in martial story." He addressed one flattering letter to "his grace," with a copy of "The Whistle"; but he made amends for that by lashing him unmercifully on every subsequent occasion.

> "Drumlanrig's towers hae tint the powers
> That kept the lands in awe, man;
> The eagle's dead, and in his stead
> We've gotten a hoody-craw, man."

At the same time, Burns was on intimate terms with John M'Murdo, the duke's chamberlain, who occupied Drumlanrig during the poet's life in Nithsdale. He sang the charms of M'Murdo's

daughter, "bonnie Jean," who was the fairest maid "at kirk and market to be seen," and "Phyllis the Fair," for whom Stephen Clarke entertained more than a teacher's regard. The stream which flows past the ruins of Tibbers Castle, close by Drumlanrig, is connected with a prophecy doubtfully ascribed to Thomas of Ercildoune:

"When the Marr Burn rins where man never saw,
The House of the Hassock (Drumlanrig) is near a fa'."

It is said that Burns loved to stroll by this stream, and that there on one occasion he composed the song:

"Their groves o' sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon,
Where bright-beaming summers exalt the perfume;
Far dearer to me yon lone glen o' green breckan,
Wi' the burn stealing under the lang, yellow broom.
Far dearer to me are yon humble broom bowers,
Where the blue-bell and gowan lurk lowly, unseen;
For there, lightly tripping amang the wild flowers,
A-listening the linnet, aft wanders my Jean."

The visitor who would know more of this beautiful and historic district, should make the village of Thornhill his headquarters for two or three days. It is a remarkably pretty and picturesque little place. Its broad, main street is lined with a double row of lime trees, and an air of peaceful comfort and prosperity pervades it. It has a monument to Joseph Thomson, the African explorer, the first European to cross the Njiri Desert, and author of that delightful book of travel, *Through Masailand.* Thomson was born at Penpont in 1858; part of his youth was spent at Gatelawbridge, near Thornhill, where are the quarries at one time leased by Robert

Paterson, the "Old Mortality" of Sir Walter Scott. The constitution of the explorer was undermined by the hardships of his travel, and he died in London at the early age of thirty-seven.

A wet afternoon entails no loss to the visitor to Thornhill, for in the museum founded by the late Dr Grierson he will find a remarkable collection of local antiquities, including many rare Burns relics and manuscripts. Dr Grierson strongly advocated the formation of local museums in every district; and no one who has seen his interesting and valuable collection, or that similar one which an equally devoted enthusiast has formed in Kirkcudbright, will doubt the wisdom of his plan.

Although Burns knew Thornhill intimately, to satisfy the demands for association, local tradition has been reduced to recalling that he had his boots made by a Thornhill shoemaker. Professor Gillespie of St Andrews, who was educated at Wallace Hall, in Closeburn parish, remembered seeing the poet in Thornhill on a fair day in 1790. "I saw the poet he said, "enter the door of a poor woman (Kate Watson, who was in the habit of keeping a shebeen on fair days). I anticipated nothing short of an immediate seizure of a certain greybeard and barrel, which, to my certain knowledge, contained the contraband commodities our bard was in search of. A nod, accompanied by a significant movement of the forefinger, brought Kate to the doorway, and I was near enough to hear the following words distinctly uttered: 'Kate, are you mad? Dinna you know that the supervisor

and I will be in upon you in the course of forty minutes? Good-bye t'ye at present!' I had access to know that the friendly hint was not neglected. It saved a poor widow from a fine of several pounds for committing a quarterly offence, by which the revenue was probably subject to an annual loss of five shillings."

Thornhill was more closely associated with Thomas Carlyle than with Burns. The plain-looking farmhouse of Templand, the home of the Welshes, in which Carlyle was married, is little more than a mile from the village. Mrs Russell of Holm Hill, a modest mansion on the Nith, on the outskirts of the town, was Jane Welsh's dearest friend. Dr Russell had a rough seat built for Carlyle in his favourite corner of the grounds of Holm Hill, and there the great man used to sit for hours at a stretch, smoking his churchwarden, and inaccessible to the many visitors who called in the hope of seeing him. It is still called Carlyle's Seat.

It is an easy and a beautiful walk from Templand up the Cample valley to Crichope Linn, and the Carlyles paid many visits to this romantic spot. Carlyle even made it the subject of what he called "some beautiful doggerel," in which he makes the genius of the place say:

"Cloistered vault of living rocks,
Here have I my darksome dwelling,
Working, sing to stones and stocks,
Where beneath my waves go welling.
Beams flood-borne athwart me cast
Arches see, and aisles moist gleaming;
Sounds for aye my organ blast,
Grim cathedral, shaped in dreaming."

Scott also visited Crichope Linn, and he remembered "the romantic scene of rocks, thickets, and cascades" when he wrote his description of Burley's hiding-place in *Old Mortality*. The stream dashes over a precipice nearly a hundred feet in height, and rushes through a narrow cleft in the old red sandstone rocks, until it reaches a deep pool, beside which, tradition says, a cobbler used to sit on the "souter's seat," and mend the shoes of the Covenanters who were hiding in the glen. If there ever was any cave such as that in which Henry Morton had his perilous interview with the insane Balfour, it has entirely disappeared.

South of Thornhill the vale of Nith contracts, until below Closeburn the hills come down close to the river. High on the left towers Queensberry, on the green slopes of which the Ettrick shepherd tended his flock. On the other side of the valley is Tynron Doon, at the base of which Hogg made his unsuccessful attempt at farming on his own account. Like Burns, he stocked his farm with the profits of his pen; his failure was even more disastrous than that of the other bard. Within three years he was penniless, and glad to accept the hospitality of his friendly neighbour, Macturk of Stenhouse, whom he remembered with gratitude in the *Queen's Wake*.

The Closeburn portion of the Nith valley abounds with Burns associations. Only the churchyard is left of Old Dalgarnock, at which the famous market trysts were held in olden times. The markets were transferred in 1601 to what was then called New Dalgarnock; it is now the "auld toun" portion of the village of

Thornhill. The fairs were held in Thornhill itself in Burns's day, but he was familiar with the old name, and hence we find him saying in "The Braw Wooer":

"But a' the niest week, as I petted wi' care,
I gaed to the tryste o' Dalgarnock,
And wha but my fine, fickle lover was there?
I glowr'd as I'd seen a warlock, a warlock,
I glowr'd as I'd seen a warlock.

• • • • • •

He begged, for Gudesake! I wad be his wife,
Or else I wad kill him wi' sorrow;
So e'en to preserve the poor body in life,
I think I maun wed him to-morrow, to-morrow;
I think I maun wed him to-morrow."

The massive walls of Closeburn Castle have stood for eight centuries, and they still stand strong and secure. This was the home of the Kirkpatricks, friends of Wallace and of Bruce, one of whom was that Sir Roger de Kirkpatrick who made "siccar" of the death of the Red Comyn in the Greyfriars Church, Dumfries. In their time the castle was almost surrounded by a lake, on which, it was said, a swan always appeared when a death was about to occur in the Closeburn family. The lake has now been drained, and the Kirkpatricks are no longer lords of Closeburn. So we may suppose that the swan has ceased to haunt the scene. Burns was a frequent visitor to the castle, which was occupied by his friend, William Stewart, to whom he addressed some flattering verses:

"Come, bumpers high, express your joy,
The bowl we maun renew it;
The tappet hen, gae bring her ben,
To welcome Willie Stewart."

Stewart was the son of a Closeburn publican, and early in life engaged in what is still called "the Scotch trade." In the course of his travels with his pack of drapery goods, he met the Rev. Dr Stuart-Menteith, who had thoughts of purchasing Closeburn estate, at that time for sale. Stewart's knowledge of the property and his praise of its excellences impressed Dr Stuart-Menteith so favourably, that he bought the estate and appointed Stewart his factor. The "lovely Polly Stewart" was a lass of sixteen or seventeen when Burns knew her at Closeburn. She did not enjoy the happiness which the poet prayed might fall to her share when he sang:

> "May he whase arms shall fauld thy charms,
> Possess a leal and true heart!
> To him be given to ken the heaven
> He grasps in Polly Stewart."

According to Dr Ramage, she was married to her cousin. He had afterwards to leave the country under a cloud, and dared not return. He died abroad, and Polly was then forced to marry one George Welsh, grand-uncle of the wife of Thomas Carlyle. Polly was a lover of pleasure; her husband, a sober, stern believer in the seriousness of life. They quarrelled, and separated; and Polly went to live with her father, who was then settled in Maxwelltown. There she became attached to a prisoner of war, a handsome Swiss officer, and she joined her fate to his. In 1847, she died in an asylum in Florence.

Nothing delighted Burns more than listening to a sweet-voiced singer. We know that it was

his constant practice to test the euphony of his songs by his wife's "wood-notes wild." On one of his visits to Stewart at Closeburn, he met Miss Agnes Yorstoun, daughter of the minister of the parish. Her singing charmed the poet; and, says Dr Ramage, he pressed her to sing song after song to him. Among others she sang "Roy's wife of Aldivalloch," and so well did she express the despair of the slighted Johnnie, that Burns said: "Oh, Miss Yorstoun, dinna let him despair that way; let Johnnie sing this:

> But Roy's years are three times mine,
> I'm sure his days can no be monie;
> And when that he is dead and gane,
> She may repent and tak' her Johnnie."

Burns was at all times a humorist, and the story is in all probability quite true.

The singing of another Closeburn lady commended itself to Burns. Kirsty Flint (as all the neighbours styled her) had a strong, clear pipe, and a fine knowledge of old Scots airs and ballads. Burns often rode up from Ellisland to submit a new song to Kirsty's verdict. As she sang, he sat back in the large armchair by the fireside and listened carefully for any grating word or phrase. Then the urchins, gathered round the door, to the sneck of which the poet's horse was tied, would hear: "No, Kirsty, that sounds ill. I maun change that word. Try this now! Ah! that's better." Thus they went through stanza after stanza until the song was completed, and every harsh word or phrase had been removed. Kirsty lived till 1838, to boast of the part she had played in perfecting the famous

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songs of Burns. While the poet's mother lived at Dinning, the Nithsdale farm which Gilbert Burns occupied for some time, she and Kirsty became fast friends. Dinning is but two miles from Closeburn village, on the left bank of the river. In 1798 Gilbert Burns left Mossgiel, and took a lease of this farm. Two years later he was appointed manager of Captain Dunlop's farm of Morham Mains, in East Lothian, and in 1804 he became factor of Lady Blantyre's East Lothian estates. In all these changes Agnes Broun found a home with her second son. She died in 1820, at the age of eighty-eight; her grave is in the churchyard of Bolton, East Lothian, where also Gilbert Burns and his family are buried.

A favourite haunt of Burns in Closeburn parish was Brownhill Inn, occupied by one Bacon, who was brother-in-law to William Stewart of Closeburn. Brownhill and its proprietor were the subjects of the impromptu which hinted that the landlord was apt to be too much in evidence in his own public room:

> "At Brownhill we always get dainty good cheer,
> And plenty of bacon each day in the year;
> We've a' thing that 's nice, and mostly in season—
> But why always Bacon—come, tell me a reason?"

Brownhill is now a farmhouse on the main road from Closeburn to Dumfries; but one can still identify the window from which Burns looked out when he saw the "poor but honest sodger" pass along the highway.

A correspondent of George Thomson wrote that "the poet called the wayworn traveller into

the inn, and heard the story of his adventures; after listening to which, he fell into one of these fits of abstraction not unusual with him. He was lifted to the region where he had his 'garland and singing robes about him,' and the result was the admirable song which he sent you for 'The Mill, Mill O'":

"When wild war's deadly blast was blawn,
And gentle peace returning,
Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,
And mony a widow mourning;
I left the lines and tented field,
Where lang I'd been a lodger,
My humble knapsack a' my wealth,
A poor but honest sodger."

CHAPTER XVIII

ROUND ABOUT ELLISLAND

"For him the ploughing of these fields
A more ethereal harvest yields
Than sheaves of grain;
Songs flush with purple bloom the rye,
The plover's call, the curlew's cry,
Sing in his brain."

BURNS came to reside in Nithsdale in June 1788. The fruitful vales of winding Nith were at their loveliest; but he had no eye for their rich beauties. His heart was with his young wife, left behind in Mauchline; he had not yet forgotten the gaieties of Edinburgh and the delights of travel; and his immediate surroundings were far from congenial. While his house at Ellisland was being built he lodged with David Cullie in a miserable hovel close by the Isle, an old tower which dates from the sixteenth century and still stands as part of a mansion on the right bank of Nith, half a mile to the south of Ellisland. He thus describes his lonely state in an epistle to his old Kilmarnock friend, Hugh Parker:

"In this strange land, this uncouth clime,
A land unknown to prose or rhyme;
Where words ne'er crost the muse's heckles,
Nor limpet in poetic shackles;

A land that prose did never view it,
Except when drunk he stacher't thro' it;
Here, ambush'd by the chimla cheek,
Hid in an atmosphere of reek,
I hear a wheel thrum i' the neuk,
I hear it—for in vain I leuk.
The red peat gleams, a fiery kernel
Enhuskèd by a fog infernal;
Here, for my wonted rhyming raptures,
I sit and count my sins by chapters;
For life and spunk like ither Christians,
I'm dwindled down to mere existence,
Wi' nae converse but Gallowa' bodies,
Wi' nae kend face but Jenny Geddes."

Rich as it is in memories of Scott and Hogg, of Carlyle and Cunningham, as well as of Burns, Nithsdale can no longer be called "a land unknown to prose or rhyme." Craigenputtock, the Carlyles' "lone home amid the sullen moor," is in the extreme west of the parish of Dunscore, on the eastern boundary of which Ellisland is situated. There, among the heather hills, amid the silence of the lonely moors, Carlyle wrote *Sartor Resartus* and the *Essay on Burns*, which is still the best among the many that have been written. In the middle of the parish is the Church of Dunscore, on which Carlyle and Emerson looked down from Craigenputtock Hill when the Scotsman summed up his philosophy in these simple words: "Christ died on the tree: that built Dunscore Kirk yonder: that brought you and me together. Time has only a relative existence." Edward Irving preached in the churchyard to a crowd too large to be accommodated in the church. Carlyle was one of the congregation. Next day he and his friend parted at Auldgirth, never to meet again in their own

country. It was in an old church on the same site that Burns writhed under the Whiggish sermons of the Rev. Joseph Kirkpatrick. In the churchyard is the grave of James White, the retired Jamaican planter, whose advice as to the route he should take to Jamaica, delayed Burns's voyage to the West Indies, and thus ultimately prevented his sailing at all.

The village of Dunscore, or Cottack (as its old name was), looks up and down the valley of the Cairn. To the north are the bonnie Maxwellton braes, where William Douglas of Fingland, the Willie who was "a wanton wag," wooed Annie Laurie, although not in the beautiful words which Lady John Scott substituted for such verse as this, which is believed to have been Douglas's composition :

"She's backit like the peacock,
She's breistit like the swan,
She's jimp about the middle,
Her waist ye weel may span ;
Her waist ye weel may span,
And she has a rolling eye,
And for bonnie Annie Laurie
I'd lay me down and die."

The bonnie Annie proved unfaithful to her Jacobite lover, and married Fergusson of Craigdarroch, the laird of broad lands some four miles higher up the Cairn. In the house of Craigdarroch, her will is still preserved, along with the famous "Whistle o' Worth" which a later Fergusson won at the bacchanalian contest in Friars' Carse.

Between Maxwellton and Craigdarroch lies

the pretty village of Moniaive, close by which a monument marks the birthplace of James Renwick, the hero of the second Sanquhar Declaration. All are in the parish of Glencairn, from which Lord Glencairn had his title, although by his time the family residence in that parish had passed into other hands. A circle of dark yews facing the braes of Maxwellton marks the site of the old castle of Glenriddel, the seat of the Riddels of Friars' Carse. The little estate which William Nicol bought in Glencairn, thereby giving point to Burns's sarcastic reference to "the illustrious lord of Laggan's many hills," is now part of the Maxwellton property. It was at Moffat, however, not at Laggan, that Willie brewed the "peck o' maut" which "Rab and Allan cam' to pree."

The ruins of the old tower of Lag, the Redgauntlet Castle of Sir Walter Scott, stand on the bleak side of a glen, scarcely two miles to the north of Dunscore village. The last occupant of Lag was the notorious Sir Robert Grierson, the prototype of him whom Wandering Willie thus described to Darsie Latimer as they trudged across the bare downs on their way to Brokenburn. "Ye maun have heard of Sir Robert Redgauntlet of that Ilk, who lived in these parts before the dear years. The country will lang mind him; and our fathers used to draw breath thick if ever they heard him named. He was out wi the Hielandmen in Montrose's time; and again he was in the hills wi' Glencairn in the saxteen hundred and fifty-twa; and sae when King Charles the Second came in, wha was in sic favour as the Laird of Redgauntlet? He was

knighted at Lonon court wi' the king's ain sword; and being a red-hot prelatist, he came down here, rampauging like a lion, with commissions of lieutenancy, and of lunacy for what I ken, to put down a' the Whigs and Covenanters in the country. Wild wark they made of it; for the Whigs were as dour as the Cavaliers were fierce, and it was which should first tire the other. Redgauntlet was aye for the strong-hand; and his name is kenn'd as wide in the country as Claverhouse's and Tam Dalyell's. Glen, nor dargle, nor mountain, nor cave, could hide the puir hill-folk when Redgauntlet was out with bugle and bloodhound after them, as if they had been sae mony deer. And troth, when they fand them, they didna make muckle mair ceremony than a Hielandman wi' a roe-buck. It was just, 'Will ye tak' the test?'—if not, 'Make ready—present—fire!'—and there lay the recusant."

Unfortunately, Willie's tale is too long to quote, and it cannot be condensed; but who has not read that perfect tale, the wildest and the weirdest that came from the wizard pen of Walter Scott? Within living memory it was the fashion in Nithsdale and Galloway to preserve the terror and fascination that still cling round the name of Lag, by an annual performance, which was known as "playing Lag." It required no rehearsal. A favourable opportunity for presenting the play was found on some stormy night about the time of Hallowe'en, when a company had assembled in farmer's kitchen or laird's dining-room; for the play was known to "gentle and semple" alike. Some one began to

speak of Lag's monstrous cruelty—how he used to put his victims in a barrel bristling with spikes, and roll them down the steep slopes of Halliday Hill; — for the imaginative Gallovidians had persuaded themselves that he did such things as that. Then some other spoke about his death—how he lay in torment, how his servants stood in a line between his house facing the "plainstanes" in Dumfries and the Nith, and passed up bucket after bucket of cold water, that he might cool his burning limbs, and how the water boiled and "fizzed" when his feet were placed in it. Another recalled that awful night when Satan came in person to fetch the soul of his faithful follower—how earth, and sky, and sea were alive with nameless horrors; how the dread "Mauthe hound" bayed at midnight, and headless horses galloped through the clouds, and from the haunted ships of Solway were heard the fearsome sounds of fiendish revelry. Then there was the story of the "corbie," evil-looking, grim, and awesome, that perched on the coffin-lid, and would not budge until the grave was reached. Last of all, there was the funeral procession—the hearse that ordinary horses could not draw; the wild gallop up the banks of Nith, when Kirkpatrick of Closeburn, Lag's comrade in the black art, yoked his Spanish steeds to the hearse, and, with a dreadful oath, took the reins in his own hand; the sudden stop at the old churchyard of Dunscore, and the agony and death of the horses which had drawn the vehicle with its awful load.

One can imagine the effect of such tales as these—told, as they were, with a wealth of

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gruesome detail, and with an air of perfect belief. It was easy to see strange shapes in the eerie shadows which the spluttering tallow-candles threw on walls and ceiling, and it required no ordinary strength of mind to resist a nervous start when a woeful moaning sounded above the howling wind. It was the beginning of the play. The door creaked on its hinges, and the strangest being simple terror could conceive hobbled into the room. It had an enormous snout, great glaring eyes with hideous hairy eyebrows, a wide, gaping mouth, and long, upright ears; and it moved about on all fours in an awkward way, unlike the motion of any beast of earth. It poked its long snout under the furniture, to smell out hiding Covenanters; it sat still with head to one side, eagerly listening for sounds of conventicles, and then it suddenly pounced on some poor Whig, who shrieked in terror, and, as a rule, grabbed the long nose of the monster, and pulled at it until it came away, and revealed that useful kitchen implement known as a potato beetle. It was all very primitive and very childish, but it served to perpetuate the exaggerated tales of the deeds and fate of the Laird of Lag. One is not surprised to know that the man whose individuality has such a hold on the popular imagination was one of the ablest men in Nithsdale of his time. With his undoubted cruelty, and his unsparing persecution even of once friendly neighbours, it was inevitable that he should be well hated. Still he seems to have been honest in the conviction that he was doing his duty; he certainly sought no private advantage, and he demands the respect which is

due to every man whose loyalty to king or creed is not shaken by adversity. After the Revolution of 1688, it was his turn to bear persecution; and it stands to his credit that, in spite of fines and long spells of imprisonment, he remained faithful to the exiled house of Stuart.

We cannot leave the story of Redgauntlet without recalling that the cautious Provost Crosbie of Dumfries was a real personage. It was he who explained the Laird's comparative freedom from annoyance by the Government, to which he was opposed, in this characteristic fashion:—"Hawks, you know, Mr Alan, will not pike out hawks' een. He is widely connected —*my* wife is a fourth cousin of Redgauntlet's." This was true of the real Provost Crosbie, who married a daughter of the Grierson who owned Barjarg Tower—a house among fine woods some three miles to the north of Lag, in which, it will be remembered, Thomas Carlyle found the library that consoled him for the want of the royal library, which he thought should be, like the royal prison, part of the equipment of every county town. The son of this marriage was the somewhat eccentric advocate, Crosbie, who furnished Scott with his character of the "erudite and fa-ce-ti-ous" Counsellor Pleydell in *Guy Mannering*.

In order that we may complete our survey of the associations of Scott with this part of the country, let us follow the Water of Cairn from Dunscore on towards Dumfries. If we turn westward and cross the stream, we shall strike the road which Carlyle traversed in his journeys

to and from his moorland home. The road is both beautiful and interesting. After we cross the border into Galloway, we have on the right the Skeoch Hill, on which, in 1678, three thousand Covenanters met to celebrate the rite of Holy Communion after their own fashion. Welsh of Irongray, the grandson of John Welsh of Ayr, and Blackadder of Troqueer, who died a prisoner on the Bass, were assisted by the ejected ministers of Rutherglen and Tongland, and the people came in turns to the Communion stones, four rows of whinstone blocks which are still in position, with a granite monument set up in their midst to tell the traveller who may find his way to the secluded spot that "these stones are significant memorials of those troublous times in which our fathers, at the peril of their lives, contended for the great principles of civil and religious freedom."

The far-famed Routen Bridge carries the road across the "auld water o' Cluden," which joins the Cairn a few yards lower, and gives its name to the united stream. It is worth our while to clamber down to the water-side for the sake of the view beneath the bridge. The volume of water is not great, and the rocks are not high; but the dark pool at our feet, the lichened rocks rising on either side, the tumbling stream beneath the arch of the bridge, and the overhanging bushes that form a leafy frame, make of the whole a picture perfect of its kind.

Just beyond the bridge, a slight rise in the road enables us to view a landscape picture on a larger scale. All lower Nithsdale lies spread out

before us, a line of woodland marking the course of the Cluden through the strath. Behind us is the valley of Cairn, its long, ascending tree-clad slopes suggesting by their symmetry that they were formed by the action of a mighty wedge cleaving the hills.

Scarcely two miles farther, a grove of oaks in a field to the left of the road marks the place where two Covenanters met their death. A monument erected in 1854 testifies to "the respect cherished by the present generation for the memory and principles of the martyrs whose ashes repose on this spot." On a flat stone are inscribed the names of the sufferers—Edward Gordon and Alexander M'Cubine—with the usual formula, and these rude lines:

> "At Lagg and Bloodie Bruce command
> We were hung up by hellish hand,
> And thus their furious rage to stay
> We dyed near Kirk of Irongray.
> Here now in peace sweet rest we take,
> Once murdered for Religion's sake."

Many visitors come year by year to Irongray; but they are not attracted thither by the martyrs' monument. They do not come to see the pretty ivy-grown church that stands amid the graves of generations of parishioners. It is not because John Welsh, one of the "Scots Worthies," and great-grandson of John Knox, was ejected from that church, nor because A. K. H. B. occupied its pulpit. They come to pay their homage to the real "Jeanie Deans," and to read her story as it is told on the flat

tombstone in the middle of the quiet churchyard:

"This stone was erected
By the Author of Waverley
in
Memory of HELEN WALKER,
who died in the year of God, 1791.

This humble individual
practised in real life
the virtues
with which fiction has invested
the imaginary character of
Jeanie Deans.
Refusing the slightest departure
from veracity,
even to save the life of a sister,
she nevertheless showed her
kindness and fortitude
in
rescuing her from the severity of the law,
at the expense of personal exertions,
which the time rendered as difficult
as the motive was laudable.

Respect the grave of poverty,
when combined with love of truth
and dear affection."

Just where a stone by the wayside tells that Dumfries is two miles distant, there is a little wood, and in it one may see some half a dozen stones clinging together, all that is left of the cottage in which Helen Walker spent her later years. The way thither lies by Cluden side, a pretty country road fringed by oaks and hazel bushes, and the silver ripple of the stream gleams

"Thro' the hazels spreading wide,
O'er the waves that sweetly glide
To the moon sae clearly,"

as it did when the shepherd lassie "ca'd the yowes to the knowes" a century ago.

Allan Cunningham is too prominent a Nithsdale character, and too closely connected with the fame of Burns, to be passed over even in a hasty sketch of this portion of the Burns country. He was born in 1784, in a humble cottage that stood among the yew trees in the grounds of Blackwood, a beautiful estate on the banks of Nith, a little to the north of the picturesque old bridge which Carlyle's father helped to build across the river at Auldgirth. John Cunningham, afterwards land-steward to Patrick Miller of Dalswinton, had a somewhat notable family of sons. James, the eldest, was a master-builder, and an occasional contributor to the periodicals of the day; Thomas, the second son, was no mean song-writer, and might have become as famous as his younger brother had he not allowed his pride to govern his muse. The poet who is silenced for a decade by an adverse criticism is too tender to be treated seriously. John, the third son, also wrote fair verse; Allan was the fourth; and Peter, the youngest, was known as the author of two works based on his experiences as a surgeon in Australia.

In his childhood Allan came under the direct influence of Burns, and when only eighteen he made the acquaintance of Hogg. "Often," he wrote to Hogg in 1826, "do I tread back to the foot of old Queensberry, and meet you coming down amid the sunny rain, as I did some twenty years ago. The old sodded shealing where we sought shelter rises now on my sight—your two dogs (old Hector was one) lie

at my feet—the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' is in my hand, for the first time, to be twice read over after sermon, as it really was—poetry, nothing but poetry, is our talk, and we are supremely happy. Or, I shift the scene to Thornhill, and there, whilst the glass goes round, and lads sing and lasses laugh, we turn our discourse on verse, and still our speech is song." It will be remembered that Hogg also described their first meeting at Queensberry, and of course, he celebrated Allan in the *Queen's Wake.*

> "Of the old elm his harp was made,
> That bent o'er Cluden's loneliest shade;
> No gilded sculpture round her flamed,
> For his own hand that harp had framed,
> In stolen hours, when, labour done,
> He stray'd to view the setting sun."

In 1809, Cunningham, then a stone-mason, assisted Cromek to collect his *Reliques* of Burns. He was somewhat piqued at the London engraver's scant appreciation of his own verse; but he found a poetic revenge by including many of his compositions in the *Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song*, which he forwarded to Cromek, who, by the way, died in happy ignorance of the deception that had been practised upon him. Allan's struggles in London as poet, literary man, and sculptor's assistant, concern us less than his work as Burns editor and biographer. He himself said that he was willing to stand or fall as an author by his Life of Burns. His personal knowledge of the poet and of his associates in Dumfries, his own poetic temperament, and his gift of a prose style which, in spite

of mannerisms and ornateness, won the praise of Southey, assuredly qualified him to undertake the task. Unfortunately, honest Allan (as Scott always called him) had a vivid imagination and an ambition to write something new about his great predecessor: consequently, he is not always trustworthy.

In 1831, Cunningham was entertained at dinner by his friends in Dumfries, an event which is notable because Thomas Carlyle was present and made his first public speech, in which he said that "he had come down from his retreat in the hills to meet Allan Cunningham at a time when scarcely any other circumstance could have induced him to move half a mile from home." Cunningham had just seen his Life of Sir David Wilkie published when death overtook him, in 1842. His prose work—three-volume novels and six-volume lives—is much less talked of now than such a song as "A wet sheet and a flowing sea," and it is as a song-writer that he will be remembered. There are evident traces of the influence of Burns in this ardent love-song:

"Red rows the Nith 'tween bank and brae,
Mirk is the night and rainie O,
Though heaven and earth should mix in storm,
I'll gang and see my Nanie O;
My Nanie O, my Nanie O;
My kind and winsome Nanie O,
She holds my heart in love's dear bands,
And nane can do't but Nanie O.

. . . . . .

"Tell not, thou star at gray daylight,
O'er Tinwald-top so bonny O,
My footsteps 'mang the morning dew,
When coming frae my Nanie O;

My Nanie O, my Nanie O;
Nane ken o' me and Nanie O;
The stars and moon may tell 't aboon,
They winna wrang my Nanie O."

Burns had been six months in Nithsdale, and had gathered in his first crop on his new farm before his wife joined him. She came in the first week of December; but the house at Ellisland was not then ready for occupancy, and she found a lodging at the Isle. In the spring of 1789 the young couple took formal possession of their own house. It was, of course, a gala-day; and there were certain simple rites and ceremonies to be observed, in order that good-luck should follow them throughout their tenancy. Dressed in their Sunday best, they would walk with their friends along the banks of Nith from the Isle to Ellisland. The first to enter the house would be a servant-maid, bearing in her hand the family Bible, on which would rest a bowl of salt. The husband would follow with his wife on his arm. As they crossed the threshold a neighbour would step forward, and break an oat-cake over the head of the bride. Then all would gather within the house to drink a *pax intrantibus*. In the evening there would probably be a "house-warming," a dance on the new floors, and a jolly meeting of friends and neighbours. Only after such ceremonies as these could a young couple settle down with any hope of prosperity in a new house.

This is the point at which to say all that need be said of Burns and Jean Armour. It has been stated, on the one hand, that Burns married Jean from a crude sense of duty rather than from love;

and that it was only because Ellison Begbie, Mary Campbell, Peggy Chalmers, and Clarinda were lost or denied to him, that he turned with serious mind to Jean. On the other hand, it has been said that this "facile, empty-headed" creature was a drag on him—that he was not even first in her affections, and that the marriage was the beginning of the end of Burns's career. No one who knows the facts can have the slightest difficulty in refuting these statements, insulting as they are, to the memory both of the poet and of one who proved herself to be as true a wife as ever man was blessed with. It is worse than idle to conjecture what Burns's life would have been had he married some other woman. It is enough that there is absolutely no evidence to show that he ever regretted, or ever had cause to regret, his marriage with the woman to whom he was bound in honour before he saw either Peggy Chalmers or Clarinda. He was happy in having in Jean "the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the country." She was his "dear love," whose letter gave him a pleasure no other could give, in the first months of their married life; and she was "his dearest love" seven days before his death, when the thought that he was leaving her and her children to the tender mercies of a world which had been none too kind to him, was bitterer than the bitterness of death itself.

Patrick Miller of Dalswinton had offered Burns the choice of three farms—two on the rich holms on the east side of the Nith; and Ellisland, on the west side, with its hundred acres, consist-

ing in part of a fertile strip alongside the river, and in part of stony fields, between the river and the road running northward from Dumfries. Burns made a poet's choice. The house he built stood on a high gravelly bank above the stream in a delightful situation, overlooking the woods of Dalswinton on the opposite side of the river. It had but one storey, with garrets for the servants. In the west end there was a "company" room, and in the east a sitting-room, with a window in the gable from which one can see the path leading to the Isle and the silver stream gleaming through the trees. A kitchen and bedroom occupied the middle of the simple abode. Except that a kitchen has been built out and the main entrance in consequence changed, the plan of the present house is practically that of the one which Burns built; and, although it has been definitely asserted that Burns's cottage was pulled down in 1812 (only twenty-four years after it was built), it seems much more probable that the main portion of the walls at least still stands as it did in 1788. That is the opinion of the present occupant of the farm. Some writing on the window of the sitting-room is attributed to Burns, and is adduced as proof that this part of the house must date from his time; but the writing itself can scarcely be accepted as Burns's, and the question must be left open.

At any rate, the stackyard is the same as that in which one clear October night in 1789 the poet lay on a heap of straw with his eyes fixed on a beautiful planet, the while his soul was stirred by sad, sweet memories, and his heart was singing this undying strain:—

"Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usher'st in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.
O Mary! dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?"

Although from Ellisland one can see the square red sandstone house which Patrick Miller built on his estate of Dalswinton, the Nith flows between; and the nearest bridge is at Auldgirth, three miles to the north. Old yews are grasping at the foundation stones of the castle of the Comyns, and it is difficult even to trace its site. It was from Dalswinton that the Red Comyn set out, on a February morning in 1306, to meet Robert the Bruce in the church of the Minorite friars in Dumfries. After Comyn's death, Bruce burned down the Castle of Dalswinton, and gave the lands to Sir Walter Stewart. Long afterwards, they were held by a branch of the powerful Maxwell family, and part of their keep still stands in ruins beside the present house. Burns was an occasional visitor to Dalswinton; but, although no actual breach occurred between him and his landlord, their friendship cooled as time went on. Miller was, in many respects, a remarkable man. He was born in Glasgow in 1731, and part of his youth was spent at sea. He afterwards made a fortune as a banker in Edinburgh, and his later years were devoted to agriculture and to experiments in navigation. He converted a dismal swamp beside his house into a pretty lake; and on it he launched the paddle-steamer which was

the first steam-driven vessel to move on British waters. Miller appears to have originated the idea of employing wheels with paddles; James Taylor suggested steam as the motive power; and William Symington built the engine of the little steamer which made its first voyage on 14th October 1788. After the conclusion of the experiments, the engine was kept as an ornament in Dalswinton House. In 1815, the date of Miller's death, it was sold for a small sum. In 1853, it was placed by Mr Bennett Woodcroft in the Patent Office Museum, and it now forms part of the Marine Engineering Collection in the southern galleries of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The grounds of Friars' Carse were to Burns at Ellisland what the braes of Ballochmyle and the woods of Barskimming had been to him at Mossgiel—with this distinction, that his musing-ground by the Nith was much more accessible than had been his haunts by the Ayr. He had but to cross a few fields to reach the boundary wall of Captain Riddel's small estate, and a path through the thick copsewood brought him to the "Hermitage," a little summer-house which Riddel had built in a secluded part of the grounds. The actual retreat is not now in existence; but Mr Nelson, who owned Friars' Carse for some time, took care to have another "Hermitage" erected on the very site of that in which the poet wrote the lines:

"Thou whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed,
Be thou deckt in silken stole,
Grave these counsels on thy soul.

Life is but a day at most,
Sprung from night—in darkness lost ;
Hope not sunshine ev'ry hour,
Fear not clouds will always lour."

The window on which, according to his custom, he transcribed these verses, is now in the Observatory at Dumfries ; but they have been reproduced on the window of the Hermitage. The world is far away from this romantic spot, and it needs no very vivid imagination to see the poet sitting there on a summer Sunday afternoon beneath the yellow-blossomed laburnum tree, pondering his verse till "the shades of evening close, beck'ning him to long repose."

Friars' Carse, as the name suggests, was originally a monastic establishment which, like that at Mauchline, was subject to the monks of Melrose. The Kirkpatricks of Ellisland became its proprietors at the time of the Reformation, and from them it passed into the hands of the Nithsdale Maxwells. It was afterwards owned by the Riddels of Glenriddel, and the original square tower was succeeded by the two-storey house with which Burns was familiar. About the beginning of last century Dr Crichton bought the estate, and on the death of his widow it was sold to Mr Thomas Nelson of Carlisle who added very largely to the house, although he preserved the most interesting part of the old building. In 1895, the trustees of the Crichton Royal Institution became proprietors of Friars' Carse, and it is now a convalescent home in connection with that enormous establishment for the treatment of the insane.

It would be difficult to find a more charming

situation than that of Friars' Carse, with green lawns and beautiful gardens sloping down to the river, and surrounding woods intersected by delightful paths, on the sides of which are set up here and there curious sculptured stones, mementos of the antiquarian tastes of Robert Riddel. Within the house several manuscripts of Burns are preserved—the original copy of "The Whistle" and the "Lines written in the Hermitage" being the most important. The dining-room is scarcely less interesting as an example of the dining-hall of an eighteenth-century country house than it is for its Burns associations. It was in this room that Alexander Fergusson of Craigdarroch, Sir Robert Laurie of Maxwellton, and Robert Riddel of Glenriddel met to compete for the whistle which their common ancestor, a former laird of Maxwellton, had won from the Danish champion of Bacchus, who came over to Scotland in the train of Anne of Denmark.

> "Three joyous good fellows, with hearts clear of flaw;
> Craigdarroch, so famous for wit, worth, and law;
> And trusty Glenriddel, so skill'd in old coins;
> And gallant Sir Robert, deep-read in old wines."

The whole affair is a curious commentary on the customs of the eighteenth-century country gentleman; for the three contestants were by no means disreputable characters. Fergusson was a much-respected landlord; Laurie was member of Parliament for Dumfriesshire for thirty years; Riddel was an elder of the kirk, and a man of literary tastes. They made their arrangements for the contest as openly as their modern repre-

sentatives would arrange a match at billiards or a game of golf. M'Murdo of Drumlanrig was appointed judge, and two other neighbours were invited to witness the fray. Burns was not one of the appointed witnesses, but he seems to have been sent for, when the spirit of the contest was upon the combatants, to seek whatever inspiration there might be in the sight of three respectable gentlemen deliberately setting themselves to test their capacity for claret.

"Six bottles a-piece had well wore out the night,
When gallant Sir Robert, to finish the fight,
Turn'd o'er in one bumper a bottle of red,
And swore 'twas the way that their ancestors did.
Then worthy Glenriddel, so cautious and sage,
No longer the warfare ungodly would wage:
A high Ruling Elder to wallow in wine!
He left the foul business to folks less divine.
The gallant Sir Robert fought hard to the end;
But who can with Fate and quart bumpers contend?
Though Fate said, a hero shall perish in light;
So uprose bright Phœbus—and down fell the knight."

At Friars' Carse Burns came to know Mr and Mrs Walter Riddel of Woodley Park, who were to be prominent in his life at Dumfries. There also he met the "charming, lovely Davies," whom he immortalised in one of his most tender love-songs:

"Bonnie wee thing, cannie wee thing,
Lovely wee thing, was thou mine;
I wad wear thee in my bosom,
Lest my jewel I should tine."

Miss Deborah Davies was a relation of the Riddels, a sparkling, pretty, *petite* young Englishwoman, and Burns duly worshipped her from afar. Allan Cunningham relates her subsequent

sad career. She was betrothed to a Captain Delany; her friends objected to his poverty; delays ensued; the lover became cold; his regiment was called abroad; she heard from him but once, and was left to mourn the change of affection—to droop and die.

A still more notable meeting at Friars' Carse was that between Burns and Francis Grose, the antiquary, who was Riddel's guest while he was engaged in "takin' notes" of Friars' Carse itself and of Lag Castle, Closeburn Castle, and other places in the neighbourhood, for his *Antiquities of Scotland.* Grose was the son of a Swiss jeweller who had settled near London. In youth he studied as an artist, and he was for some time a captain of militia; but, after having spent a fortune left him by his father, he took to writing, and he had already published his *Antiquities of England and Wales* when Burns met him. In the preface to the *Antiquities*, he acknowledged his indebtedness to Captain Riddel "for much hospitable entertainment," and to "his ingenious friend, Mr Robert Burns," who "not only was at the pains of marking out what was most worthy of notice in Ayrshire, the county honoured by his birth, but who also wrote, expressly for this work, the pretty tale annexed to Aloway church." Burns, Riddel, and the "fine, fat, fodgel wight" had, doubtless, some rare symposia at Friars' Carse; for the learned antiquary was quite as fond of social enjoyment and of the pleasures of the table as he was of exploring any "auld, houlet-haunted biggin."

Among the antiquities of Ayrshire which Burns recommended to the notice of Grose was

Kirk Alloway, and Grose promised to include it in his work, on condition that Burns furnished him with a witch story to accompany the sketch. Burns thereupon wrote out three tales, which, he said, had some connection with the ruin, but his friends apparently persuaded him to put one of them into verse. At any rate, on the morning following an evening at Friars' Carse, he betook himself to his favourite walk along the side of Nith southward from Ellisland. Farm work and excise duties were alike forgotten. In the afternoon his wife went out to seek him. She found him behaving like one possessed: he was gesticulating wildly, and reciting something in a loud voice, the while the tears streamed down his cheeks. She prudently withdrew, and in the evening the poet returned to the farmhouse and read to her "Tam o' Shanter," the poem which he himself held to be his masterpiece.

There can be no doubt that the first months of Burns's stay at Ellisland were the happiest of his life. There was plenty of work on the farm, but he had helpers enough to overtake it without oppressive toil. It was seldom that some of his Ayrshire relations were not his guests, and he had occasional cheering visits from old friends or new admirers. There is even some evidence that he had decided that the time had come for him to attempt his *magnum opus*. Nevertheless, he soon realised that farming on the Nith was to be no more successful than it had been on the Doon or the Ayr. Even a rental of fifty pounds was hard to raise in times when, on the evidence of his landlord, "oats ready to be cut were sold at twenty-five shillings per acre upon

the holm grounds." As early as July 1789, he wrote to Graham of Fintry that his farm must, for half a lease, be a losing bargain, and only the fear that "leaving the farm so soon may have an unsteady, giddy-headed appearance" prevented him from throwing up the lease. Next month he was appointed an excise officer with a salary of fifty pounds a year, and a district which included ten parishes. It was not his ideal of life, but

> "I hae a wife and twa wee laddies—
> They maun hae brose and brats o' duddies:
> Ye ken yoursels my heart right proud is—
> I need na vaunt—
> But I'll sned besoms—thraw saugh woodies,
> Before they want."

For two years he strove to overtake the duties of farmer and exciseman. He had to ride two hundred miles a week; in the early morning he was to be found at labour in the fields, as on that day when his wrath was kindled at the sight of the wounded hare; the evenings were occupied with correspondence with transcribing the results of the visits the muses had paid him as he jogged through the Nithsdale hills, and with his work as "treasurer, librarian, and censor" of the parish library he had founded. It was more than one man could accomplish. Still, in spite of occasional fits of despondency, he was not unhappy in Ellisland, and it must have been with some regret that he sold off stock and crop at the end of 1791, and said good-bye to the home which he himself had planned by the banks of winding Nith. Was that in his mind when he wrote immediately before or immediately after leaving Ellisland, the

"Song of Death," which Thomas Campbell held to be one of his most brilliant efforts?

"Farewell, thou fair day, thou green earth and ye skies,
Now gay with the broad setting sun!
Farewell, loves and friendships, ye dear tender ties!
Our race of existence is run.

"Thou grim king of terrors, thou life's gloomy foe,
Go, frighten the coward and slave!
Go, teach them to tremble, fell tyrant! but know,
No terrors hast thou to the brave!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH

"There was Maggie by the banks o' Nith,
A dame wi' pride eneugh."

Our knowledge of the primitive inhabitants of Nithsdale is but dim and shadowy. A few place-names recall their Gaelic origin; the remains of Druid circles, like that at Holywood, enable us to guess at their religion; and from the crannogs which recent research has laid bare, we learn something of the kind of life they led. Civilisation came in the train of the conquering Romans. The great rampart, known as the Deil's Dyke, which stretches from the shores of Loch Ryan to the Nith, is evidence that the Selgovæ of Nithsdale and the Novantæ of Galloway had possessions worth protecting from their booty-driving kinsmen in the north. St Ninian brought the blessed truths of Christianity to the shores of Solway. The Arthur of poetic legend had his basis in a Christian British chief, who fought twelve great battles against the pagan Saxons on the banks of Nith and in Strathclyde.

History does not record the date of the erection of the first rude "fort among the brush-

wood," which is supposed to have given Dumfries its name. It is not even certain where the ancient stronghold stood. Evidence has been adduced to prove that it occupied the site of what was known as Comyn's Castle, the name of which remains in Castledykes, half a mile to the south of the town; but as it was the custom for a township to grow up under the immediate shelter of the keep, it seems more probable that the old castle of Dumfries crowned the summit of the hill on which the old town was built. The remains of a castle, for long a stronghold of the Maxwells, stood there until the eighteenth century, and Greyfriars Church now occupies its site.

Something like historical certainty begins in the middle of the twelfth century, when Dunegal, one of the Dougalls or M'Dowalls of Galloway, ruled over the Celtic people of Nithsdale in patriarchal style. "All the land on which the town of Dumfries now stands," says the historian of Dumfries, "and many a fair rood besides, were, under the name of Stranith, held by Dunegal as their legal superior; the inhabitants being recognised as the tenants of the soil, according to their real or supposed relationship to him as head of the clan." Before the end of the century William the Lion raised the town to the status of a royal burgh, and gave the burgesses the right to choose their own local rulers. The town owed even more to William's grand-niece, the Lady Devorgilla, daughter of Alan, the last of the great Lords of Galloway.

"A bettyr lady than scho wes nane
In all the yle of Mare Bretane."

She was married to John de Balliol of Barnard Castle, and his death in 1269 left her the richest widow in the kingdom. Never was wealth more worthily bestowed. Her rich endowment of Balliol College, Oxford, was but an example of her munificence. She founded monasteries for the Black Friars in Wigtown, and for the Grey Friars in Dumfries, of which the only trace now left is the name Friars' Vennel, given to the narrow street that runs from the head of the High Street to the river. The stately ruins of Sweetheart Abbey, which stand, beautiful even in decay, seven miles south of the town, attest her devotion to her husband's memory. She caused his heart to be embalmed, and placed in a casket of silver and ebony, which was her constant companion until she had erected a fitting resting-place for it. When the New Abbey, so called to distinguish it from Dundrennan, founded by Devorgilla's ancestor, Fergus, was completed, the previous casket was enshrined beside the high altar. There, in 1290, Devorgilla herself was laid to rest, and by her directions her husband's heart was placed upon her breast, the abbey gaining thus the name of *Dulce Cor.*

To visit her lands in Galloway, Devorgilla had to cross the Nith at Dumfries. The passage was at no time easy, and it was fraught with danger when the river was in flood. She therefore resolved to build a bridge across the Nith. It was a wonderful structure for the age in which it was built. Its total length was over four hundred and fifty feet, and it had nine arches, of which six remain to this day, to remind Dumfriesians of the debt they owe to the pious builder. For

over five hundred years it was the sole means of communication between Dumfries and Galloway, and although six centuries have passed since it was built, it is still available for foot passengers.

From its situation and importance, Dumfries was bound to play a leading part in the long struggle between Scotland and England which virtually began with the death of Alexander III., in 1286. This was then the national prayer:

"Quhen Alysandyr oure kyng was dede
That Scotland led in luŭe and lé
Away wes sons off ale and brede,
Off wyne and war, off gamyn and glé;
Oure gold wes changyd into lede.
Cryst borne into Vyrgynyté
Succoure Scotland and remede
That stad is in perplexyté."

Dumfries was a place of considerable strength. The Nith swept round it in a semicircle, and protected it on three sides. In front there stretched a marsh, which led up to the trackless Lochar Moss; the way from the south by the shores of Nith was guarded by the castles of Comlongan and Caerlaverock, as well as by a fort half a mile to the south of the town; various places of strength offered resistance to any force which attempted to approach from the north-east; and in later years a wall was built along the eastern side of the town. This wall was manned as late as 1715, when the citizens of Dumfries feared an attack by the Jacobites under Lord Kenmure. In spite of all its defences, its ports and "warks," the town was taken and retaken time after time; and one must turn to

FRIARS' CARSE. *Page* 285.

the Maxwells' Castle of Caerlaverock for such a tale of strenuous defence as gladdens the hearts of the children of a warlike race.

It is strange that nothing remains of any of the older historic buildings of Dumfries except a name here and there, and a few stones of the little chapel that Christina Bruce erected on the gallows mound, on which St Mary's Church now stands, in memory of her husband, Sir Christopher Seton, who there suffered death for his share in the murder of Comyn. That event must have more than passing mention. Before the capture and execution of Wallace, Robert the Bruce had played a doubtful part in Scottish affairs. In 1305 he seems to have determined to take a decided course. He and John Comyn, grandson of Devorgilla, were the only serious claimants for the throne. United, they might throw off the English yoke; as long as they were rivals, neither could succeed. Various accounts have been given of preliminary negotiations for alliance; but nothing is known with certainty, except that they met on February 10, 1306, within the church of the Greyfriars in Dumfries; that there, from high words they came to blows, and that Bruce's dagger struck down Comyn in the sacred building. Hastening outside, Bruce explained his agitation to his friends Lindsay and Kirkpatrick, by saying, "I doubt I have slain the Comyn." "You doubt," said Kirkpatrick; "is that a thing to be left in doubt? I'll mak siccar." Entering the church, he despatched the wounded knight, whose uncle, Sir Robert Comyn, is said to have been slain in attempting his defence. It is impossible to

share the jubilation of the poet who wrote of this deed :

> "Scotland ! of all thy famous shrines
> Let one be dear to thee—
> Dumfries ! which bore that priceless fruit,
> The deed that made thee free."

It is true that it finally committed Bruce to a course from which there was no turning back : it gave him that singleness of aim without which success cannot be achieved ; but the best one can say of the deed itself is that it was to all appearance unpremeditated. No knight of those days would have voluntarily added the crime of sacrilege to the venial offence of removing a dangerous rival from his path, and Robert the Bruce was not the man to have left to another the completion of a task, however hateful, which he had previously resolved to perform.

Dumfries was the scene of many another historic event which we must pass over in silence. Kings were its frequent visitors, and there still hangs on the walls of the Town Hall the silver gun which James VI. presented to the burgesses, to be a prize for skill in marksmanship. The last contest for the trophy took place in 1831 ; but by far the most famous was that of 1777, which is celebrated in John Mayne's poem, "The Siller Gun," in which he not only describes the scene when the "Seven Trades"

> "Forgather'd for their Siller Gun
> To shoot ance mair,"

but also gives an entertaining account of the worthies of the town, and contrives to introduce

much local history amidst a mass of delightful banter.

The last of the Stuarts to visit Dumfries was Prince Charlie, on his retreat from Derby in December 1745. He was no welcome visitor, and it was only fear that induced the citizens to make an attempt to raise the two thousand pounds and the thousand pairs of shoes which he demanded as their contribution to his needs. For three days he held court in a house in the High Street which is now the Commercial Hotel. His host was placed in an awkward position. His present comfort demanded that he should be civil to his guest, and regard for his future safety forbade him to make too great a show of hospitality. He is said to have overcome the difficulty by continuing in a state of irresponsible intoxication during the whole of the prince's stay. A false alarm set Charles and his Highlanders off in haste. They carried with them ex-Provost Andrew Crosbie and Walter Riddel of Glenriddel as hostages for the payment of the balance of the town's contribution. On their way up Nithsdale they halted at Drumlanrig Castle, where the marks of their visit are still to be seen in the mutilated portraits of William of Orange and his consort. Fifty years later the burgesses of Dumfries were singing their townsman's song:

> "The Nith shall run to Corsincon,
> And Criffel sink in Solway,
> Ere we permit a foreign foe
> On British ground to rally!"

They have not yet been called upon to make good their boast. The centuries of strife have passed,

and even the memories of the days when every member of the trades wrought with his sword beside him, are growing faint.

No town in Scotland has had more pretty things said of it than the fair Queen of the South, and none is more worthy of them. "If I was confined to Scotland," says young Melford in *Humphrey Clinker*, "I would choose Dumfries as my place of residence"; and all Dumfriesians think he might with safety have omitted the qualifying clause. The town is beautifully set in the middle of the lowest and richest of the three divisions of Nithsdale. It is a pleasing land of hill and stream, rather than of mountain and flood, although the towering peak of Queensberry in the north, and the great mass of Criffel in the south are more than hills, and when the Nith is rolling brown "from bank to brae," it is much more than stream. East and west, low lines of hills shut in the valley, and all between is a smiling wooded plain, except where the dark moss of Lochar adds a note of gloom to form a contrast to the bright landscape.

For centuries Dumfries has been the social and commercial capital of the south of Scotland. It is now a great railway centre, with thriving industries; its population has been nearly trebled since Burns's day; but it has not lost its character of a charming country town, with beautiful walks by wood and river all about it. Time's changes have been wrought gradually. Its splendid Academy is the natural successor to the school in which James Gray taught Burns's children; the building of the Ewart Library is but a further step in the direction taken in 1792,

when Burns helped to found a library, and in return for honorary membership gifted to it several volumes which are now the treasured possessions of the Mechanics' Institute. The High Street remains the principal street in the town, and the quaint, old-fashioned Mid-steeple which Tobias Bacup built in 1708 still stands in the middle of its thoroughfare. At the end of the High Street, in front of Greyfriars Church, there has been erected a Burns statue. One might complain that pipe and book, mouse and daisies, seek to relieve the imagination of the task of finding the poet in the marble itself, but the statue is noteworthy as the best example of a woman's conception of Burns.

The United Free Church in Loreburn Street (a name that recalls the old slogan of the Dumfries trades) takes the place of and is situated close by the Secession church, to which Burns used to go to hear Mr Inglis preach, "because he preaches what he believes, and practises what he preaches." Burns also attended St Michael's Church, under the shadow of which he was laid to rest. St Michael is the patron saint of the town, and there has been a church of St Michael on this site since the thirteenth century. A brass tablet on one of the stone pillars which separate aisle from nave, tells that "Robert Burns worshipped in the pew adjoining this pillar." A similar tablet on another pillar points out the pew occupied by Thomas Aird, and a third poet is commemorated in the mural tablet set up by Sir Alexander Cunningham in honour of his father, the biographer of Burns.

The churchyard of St Michael s is richer in

monuments than any other provincial graveyard in the kingdom. For eight hundred years it has been a burying-ground, and many a citizen of note in Dumfries has his worth extolled on its memorial stones. The Martyrs' Monument and the Cholera Monument tell their own sad stories, and the massive Mausoleum in the south-east corner is the tribute of Dumfries to the memory of its greatest citizen. Many of Burns's friends sleep in the old churchyard. Within the railing which surrounds the Mausoleum is the grave of James M'Clure, a humble letter-carrier, who "was the constant and faithful friend of Burns." Jessie Lewars and her husband were buried near by. Gabriel Richardson's grave is not far off, and Colonel de Peyster lies a few steps further on. Provost Staig and his family sleep close by the south wall; John Bushby of Tinwald Downs, Gracie, the banker, and many more whom Burns knew, are at rest in this old churchyard.

Dumfries is situated on the east side of the Nith, but it is practically one with Maxwelltown; the old Brigend of Dumfries, on the Galloway side, which is a much more reputable place to-day than it can have been when Sir John Fielding said that the Metropolitan police could track a thief through the whole island unless he got into the Gorbals of Glasgow or the Brigend of Dumfries. Maxwelltown is built at the base of the Corbelly Hill, the summit of which is crowned by the magnificent convent erected by the late Dowager Lady Herries in 1884, for the nuns of the Perpetual Adoration. Nearer the river, on the same hill, there stands what is known as the Observatory. It is worth a visit for the sake of

the view it commands of Dumfries and its beautiful surroundings, at which the curious may gaze through a camera obscura. An interesting group by a Dumfries sculptor, representing Old Mortality at work on a Covenanter's tombstone, with his white pony standing beside him, has a place in the grounds. In the museum, which occupies the principal part of the building are many Burns and other relics, as well as a series of portraits of eminent natives of Dumfriesshire and Galloway, a series which goes far to justify Ruskin's well-known eulogy of the man-producing qualities of the Scottish Lowlands

Burns first visited Dumfries in June 1787, when he was presented with the freedom of the burgh, and, as he wrote to Nicol, "was quite charmed with Dumfries folks," especially with Mr Burnside, at that time minister of the New Church. Burnside was the author of a manuscript history of Dumfries that would have been better known had not the monumental work of William M'Dowall superseded every other history of the burgh. M'Dowall was one of a group of journalists who have given the press of Dumfries a literary reputation far above that of any other Scottish provincial town. John Mayne, the author of "The Siller Gun," began life as a printer in the office of *The Dumfries Journal.* Dr Henry Duncan, the founder of Savings Banks, John M'Diarmid, and Thomas Aird, the poet, all of them friends of Thomas Carlyle, were editors of Dumfries newspapers. Among the contributors to the monthly magazines which were in vogue in the first quarter of last century, were William Bennet, Dr Robert Carruthers,

afterwards of Inverness, Allan Cunningham, Joseph Train, the friend of Scott, and William Nicholson, the author of that weird poem, "The Brownie of Blednoch."

While he lived at Ellisland, some six miles away, Burns was a frequent visitor to Dumfries—too frequent for his own good name when his wife was with her parents in Mauchline in 1790. Towards the end of 1791 he gave up the attempt to combine the offices of farmer and exciseman, and on the 19th of November he conveyed his household and belongings to a humble home of three apartments in Dumfries. The house still stands, a mean and ugly building in what is now called Bank Street. The other day we looked into the little closet which had been the poet's study. It was crammed full of disordered furniture that told a tale of better days. There was no attempt to hide the evidences of poverty and discomfort. The sight of the wretched abode recalled with unpleasing distinctness all that was miserable in the life of Burns. The change to Dumfries brought with it an increase of salary to seventy pounds; it promised freedom from excessive toil as well as from financial worry; but the sensitive soul of Burns must have cried out vehemently against the exchange of the free life, the fresh air, and the beautiful environs of Ellisland, for the wretched, cribbed existence which he must have led in that unsavoury tenement in the Wee Vennel. As he sat in his little sanctum he could hear the murmur of the Nith rushing over the Caul. It was a sound he loved to hear, but there it can only have served to stimulate his discontent.

DUMFRIES. (Bank Street at right angles to River.)

The little shop on the ground floor of the house in Bank Street was the office of John Syme, distributor of stamps. Syme had been an Edinburgh lawyer and a soldier in his day, and community of political creed drew him and Burns together. In Syme's company Burns made his first tour through Galloway; and it was as they rode in a storm through the wild Glenkens that the stern hymn which gave voice to thoughts that had been slumbering in Burns's brain since he knelt by the stone on which Bruce set his standard at Bannockburn, sang itself, as Carlyle said, through the soul of the poet. Lord Young, the venerable judge, of whom Dumfries was justly proud, remembered Syme as an interesting old gentleman, with a keen appreciation of the point of a good story. Burns was often the guest of Syme in his house at Ryedale, on the Maxwelltown side of the river. Hard drinking was the fashion of the time, and Syme was given to hospitality. His jovial parties were often carried on well into the morning; and although Burns sometimes did protest that he had still to cross Devorgilla's bridge, it was easy to overrule scruples expressed in such words as he scribbled on a tumbler at Ryedale:

> "There's Death in the cup, sae beware!
> Nay, mair, there is danger in touching!
> But wha can avoid the fell snare?
> The man and his wine's sae bewitching!"

Burns had many friends on the Galloway side of the Nith. Mavis Grove, about a mile to the south of Ryedale, was the residence of his "honoured Colonel," Arentz Schuyler de Peyster, to whom the poet addressed from his sickbed the

last of the rhyming epistles he was to pen. De Peyster, after serving through the Seven Years' War, retired to Dumfries, and he was the means of raising the volunteer corps of which Burns was a member. As laureate of the corps, he sang:

"Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?
Then let the loons beware, Sir;
There's wooden walls upon our seas,
And volunteers on shore, Sir."

By an unhappy chance, it was the rendering of the account for his volunteer uniform that caused the last days of the poet to be haunted by the dread of a debtor's prison.

Once at least Burns rode down the pretty country road, a narrow avenue of elms and beeches that leads from Dumfries to New Abbey, the picturesque little village beside Devorgilla's Sweetheart Abbey, on which the Waterloo monument now looks down from the slopes of Criffel. Burns rode on between the mountain and the firth until he came to Arbigland, the birthplace of that noted privateer who took to himself the name of Paul Jones. It is an old mansion, standing in beautiful grounds on the shores of Solway, and looking across the water to the blue Cumberland hills. Miss Helena Craik of Arbigland herself wooed the muses, and there is in existence an album of her verse which bears marks of Burns's perusal. One of the pieces is addressed to Captain Riddel of Friars' Carse, and contains this modest stanza:

"Though partial friends would sometimes smile,
And think the page might do,
Yet much she fears the judging eye
Of Coila's Bard and you."

LINCLUDEN ABBEY. *Page* 310.

To follow Burns in his tour through Galloway —to the Gordons' Castle of Kenmure, the loveliest spot in a district that is all beautiful; to the banks of Cree, on which his friend, Heron of Kirroughtree, for whom the political ballads were written, had his residence; to sleepy Gatehouse, famous now as the birthplace of the Faeds; to another artists' home, Kirkcudbright, Burns's "Whisky-Jean that took her gill, in Galloway sae wide"; and to St Mary's Isle, the stately house that his old friend, Lord Daer, did not live to inherit—would take us too far beyond even the wide limits we have set ourselves in our tour through the land of Burns. There is no record that he visited the "Maxwells' vet'ran chief," whose seventy-first birthday he celebrated in characteristic verse:

> "Fareweel, auld birkie! Lord be near ye,
> And then the Deil, he daurna steer ye:
> Your friends ay love, your faes ay fear ye,
> For me, shame fa' me,
> If neist my heart I dinna wear ye
> While Burns they ca' me."

More than once, however, the poet dined in the ancestral home of the ancient Nithsdale family, or, at least, in the new house of Terregles, some three miles from Dumfries, which his friend and fellow-Jacobite, Lady Winifred Maxwell, built to supersede the old castle that had sheltered Mary, Queen of Scots. Lady Winifred was the grand-daughter of that Earl of Nithsdale, whose heroic wife accomplished his escape from the Tower of London on the eve of his threatened execution, for his share in the Jacobite rebellion of 1715. She had a warm admiration for Burns,

and, probably in return for a copy of his "Lament of Mary, Queen of Scots," she presented him with a snuff-box, on the lid of which was a portrait of the unhappy queen. When Lady Winifred and her husband came to take possession of their new house, Burns welcomed them home in the poem:

"The noble Maxwells and their powers
Are coming o'er the border,
And they 'll gae big Terregles towers
And set them a' in order.
And they declare, Terregles fair
For their abode they chuse it:
There 's no a heart in a' the land
But 's lighter at the news o't."

When the traveller by rail from Dumfries to Dalbeattie is about four miles from the county town, he may look down on an old-fashioned mansion standing in a wooded valley. It was the residence of "Counsellor Pleydell," and was known as The Holm until it was bought by a gentleman named Goldie, who changed its name to Goldielea, as it is still called. In Burns's time it was known as Woodley Park, and during the first years of his life in Dumfries he paid it many a visit. His host was a younger brother of Riddel of Friars' Carse, and the hostess was a beautiful and accomplished woman who delighted in the society of men of genius. She and Burns exchanged verses; he assisted her in the publication of *Voyages to the Madeira and Leeward Caribbee Islands;* and she treated him as her social equal, visiting at his house and receiving him as her guest. Every biographer of Burns has been careful to record the story of their

estrangement. No one will seek to find an excuse for the bitter lampoons he wrote when his appeals for pardon proved unavailing. It does not seem that he lost much in the friendship of Walter Riddel, a hot-headed squire who was wont to ply his guests with liquor, and then to take offence at their speech or act; but it is sad to think that Burns's friend, the laird of Friars' Carse, died, and was buried in the old churchyard of Dunscore, while he was still estranged from his old neighbour because of that senseless quarrel with his younger brother. We are glad to remember that Burns and Maria Riddel met again in friendship at Brow, when death had set its mark upon the poet. There was no more generous tribute paid to his genius than that which she wrote for the *Dumfries Journal* a fortnight after his death. As early as March, 1795, she sent him a copy of verses, which clearly hinted that her full forgiveness only awaited his request for it.

"To thee, loved Nith, thy gladsome plains,
Where late with careless thought I ranged,
Though prest with care and sunk in wo,
To thee I bring a heart unchanged.
I love thee, Nith, thy banks and braes,
Though Memory there my bosom tear,
For there he roved that broke my heart,
Yet to that heart, ah, still how dear!"

True to the last to his love of river scenery, Burns spent many an hour in solitary meditation on the banks of Nith. He was often to be seen strolling under the lime trees that beautify the Dock Park, which is still a favourite resort of the folks of Dumfries. Frequently he wandered

along the footpath by the riverside to the junction of Cluden and Nith, where the ruins of the Auld College of Lincluden add the charm of romance to the beauties of nature. The wooded mound to the south of the ruined church was his favourite seat. There he saw the Vision of Liberty, and there he sang:

> "Yonder Clouden's silent towers,
> Where at moonshine midnight hours,
> O'er the dewy bending flowers,
> Fairies dance sae cheery."

Lincluden Abbey was founded in 1164, by Uchtred, son of Fergus of Galloway, and for about two hundred and fifty years it was occupied by Benedictine nuns. In the end of the fourteenth century, Archibald Douglas, named the Grim, expelled the nuns, and erected a college with provost and canons, which existed until 1585, when mass was last celebrated at Lincluden. For some time after that, it was occupied as a dwelling-house. Practically nothing is left of Uchtred's abbey now, the principal portion of the ruin being the beautiful chancel of the little church which Shakespeare's "renowned Douglas" and his Princess Margaret, daughter of Robert III. of Scotland, built in the beginning of the fifteenth century. Douglas was slain in battle in France, and he lies in the Cathedral of Tours. The splendid tomb of Princess Margaret is the glory of Lincluden. The recumbent figure of the princess long lay under a heap of rubbish, and the tomb has not escaped the ravages of time, but one can still see what a noble piece of architecture it must have been. The

BURNS'S HOUSE, DUMFRIES. *Page* 311.

inscription on the back of the tomb is as follows :

"A L'aide de Dieu.
Hic jacet Dna Margareta Regis Scocie Filia Quoda
Comitissa de Douglas Dna Gallividie et Vallis Anadie."

After eighteen months in the Bank Street house, Burns removed to a more commodious residence on the Millhole Brae, now known as Burns Street. His salary had been raised to ninety pounds; it was further increased by his share of fines and other such emoluments; and his family enjoyed a greater degree of comfort than they had ever previously known. According to the testimony of his eldest son, "they always had a maidservant, and sat in their parlour. That room and the two principal bedrooms were carpeted and otherwise well furnished. The poet had a mahogany dining-table, and good company often put their legs under it." When it is remembered that Burns allowed his mother an annuity of five pounds, that his brother Gilbert was his debtor to the extent of nearly two hundred pounds, and that at his death the debts outstanding, including the doctor's bill, amounted to less than fifteen pounds, it is evident that the commonly accepted notions of the extreme poverty of his later years require considerable modification. Mrs Burns continued to occupy the house in Burns Street until her death in 1834. It was purchased by her son, Colonel William Nicol Burns, and by him bequeathed to the Dumfries and Maxwelltown Education Society. For many years it was occupied by the superintendent of the adjoining Industrial School, and

when he was provided with a more suitable house, it was let to a tenant, who admitted visitors on payment of a small fee. When we saw it last, it was unoccupied, and we wandered at leisure through the empty rooms: kitchen and parlour on the ground floor; two bedrooms upstairs, in the smaller one of which the poet died; the little closet to which he retired when the noise of the children disturbed him in his studies; and the attic rooms, in which the children slept. One is glad to know that the people of Dumfries have now taken charge of the property, and that all danger of its destruction has passed; but that empty house had a melancholy charm that no furnished show-place could possess. It seemed a fitting state in which to find the house that witnessed the flight of the poet's spirit. Turnstile and ticket-box have robbed the birth-house at Alloway of all romance. They would be even more unseemly at that house of sad memories in Dumfries.

It is but a few steps from Burns's house to Shakespeare Street, in which the local theatre stands. The play-house has been enlarged since Burns's day, but traditionally it is the same as that in which he sat when Mrs Kemble's Yarico drew tears to his eyes, or Miss Fontenelle's "sweet naïveté of feature" won his plaudits, or Mrs Sutherland recited the prologue he had written for her benefit night. Edmund Kean and William Macready both had kindly memories of that old theatre, and the name of an adjoining street recalls its associations with G. V. Brooke, the great Othello.

Near the foot of the High Street, the oldest

BROW WELL. *Page* 318.

and most interesting street in Dumfries, a narrow close leads to the Globe Inn, which Burns himself described as his "howff." It is a typical old-fashioned hostelry, and has been little changed since Burns frequented it. Two window-panes upstairs bear the marks of his diamond, and the proprietrix possesses several relics of the poet. A little room, opening off the kitchen, was that in which he spent many a jovial night, and in a corner of it stands the very chair on which he used to sit. A wooden partition protects it from everyday use; but a word that we are strangers and admirers of Burns, will procure us the honour of sitting in the poet's chair. It is the last place in the world for sentiment, yet it would be interesting to know how many sit on that chair now and say, "poor Burns." The words come in spite of one. It was not the careless lad who paid threepence for his night's enjoyment in John Richard's in Tarbolton, not the rollicking young farmer who kept the table in a roar with quip and sally in Johnnie Dow's in Mauchline, who sat here. Neither was it the dissipated, dissolute reprobate of malicious fable; but a sad enough figure for all that. The story of Burns's last visit to the Globe, and of the fatal sleep in the snow which followed, may or may not be true. It is supported by nothing that can be called evidence. Not that one doubts the possibility of a man recovering from a severe illness being wholly overcome by what in ordinary circumstances he may have considered a moderate amount of liquor. It is incredible, however, that even a casual acquaintance should have suffered an intoxicated invalid to proceed alone on a

wintry night along the three hundred yards or so that lay between the Globe Inn and Burns's house. The picture of Robert Burns giving "slices of his constitution" as the price of his entrance into society, appeals to the popular imagination. It is a telling thing to say that Scotland's greatest intellect fell before Scotland's greatest enemy; but it is untrue. No one will deny that Burns did drink unwisely. With his constitution, hard drinking, as he said himself, was the devil to him. It undoubtedly shortened his days; but he was never the hopeless inebriate, shunned by friends and despised by patrons, he has too often been represented to be. The records of the Excise were carefully kept, and have been so closely scrutinised, that had he once been reproved for failure to perform the duties of his office, daily duties requiring a clear head for their adequate performance, we should have known it. Not one censure stands against the name of Burns in the books of the Excise Board, and at his death he was within a few months of promotion to a supervisorship. The cloud that overshadowed his later years in Dumfries was not so black that it could not be accounted for by the continual chafing of the proudest man in the kingdom at the hateful order that it was his business to act and not to think; by failing health, the fruits of the hard years at Mount Oliphant; and by the unpopularity which his political opinions and his bitter tongue won him among the loyal burgesses of Dumfries.

At the same time, it is easy to make too much of Burns's social ostracism in Dumfries. Whatever truth there may be in the story of his

walking the shady side of the High Street while the fashionable crowd passed by on the other side, it does not justify the inference that he was deserted by all his friends in Dumfries. In spite of foolish toasts and extravagant speeches, his loyalty was much less open to question than that of his political friend, Dr William Maxwell. Maxwell's father fought for Prince Charlie in 1745, and wrote an account of the Rebellion. He himself had taken a part in the French Revolution, and had been denounced by Burke in the House of Commons; yet he outlived his unpopularity. We have already spoken of Burns's friends on the Galloway side of the river. He had many more in the town itself, from Provost Staig, whose daughter was the "young Jessie" who was wooed and won by the son of Miller of Dalswinton, to John Lewars, his brother exciseman, whose sister was the poet's gentle nurse throughout his last illness, and whom the world now thanks for having inspired the song that Mendelssohn set to haunting music:

> "Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast,
> On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
> My plaidie to the angry airt,
> I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee."

Burns's official superiors were his friends, "tried and leal" to the end; so was James Gracie, banker and Dean of Guild, the "man of worth" of one of his epigrams; so was his landlord, Captain Hamilton, who complained that he saw less of Burns than he desired; so was Rector Gray of the Grammar School, who taught the poet's sons, and who defended his character in

after years; and so was Gabriel Richardson, the honest brewer, whose son became the friend of Franklin and of Parry, and was the first to write with authority on Arctic fauna. It is true that for a time Burns was completely estranged from the Riddels. He quarrelled with John Bushby, whose guest he had often been at Tinwald Downs; and there was never much good feeling between him and the officers ("epauletted puppies," he called them) of the regiment stationed in Dumfries. The publication of Mrs Dunlop's letters has not explained her silence during the last eighteen months of his life, but there is nothing to show that she considered him no longer worthy of her friendship. In a letter which she addressed to Gilbert Burns on the day before the poet's death (published in *The Burns Chronicle*, January 1904), she said: "It gives me real concern to hear your brother has been in a bad state of health for some time past"; and she went on to make anxious inquiries concerning the nature of his illness. She befriended his widow and family, and took a keen interest in the publication of his works. It may be that, after all, her neglect to write was due more to a difficulty in procuring "franks" than to anything else.

From Ellisland and Dumfries Burns frequently visited Annandale. Annan itself was the "Blinkin' Bess of Annandale" of *The Five Carlins;* Ecclefechan was the "unfortunate, wicked, little village" from which he sent Thomson the first copy of "O wat ye wha's in yon toun"; Lochmaben was his "Marjory o' the mony Lochs, a carlin auld and teuch," and he was intimate with its provost and minister. It

was of Jean Jaffray, the minister's daughter, that he wrote:

"I gaed a waefu' gate yestreen,
A gate, I fear, I 'll dearly rue;
I gat my death frae twa sweet een,
Twa lovely een o' bonnie blue."

Moffat was the scene of "Willie brewed a peck o' maut," and Craigieburn on the Moffat Water was the birthplace of Chloris. "Craigieburn Wood" was the first of eleven songs that Burns wrote in honour of Jean Lorimer, the flaxen-haired daughter of a well-to-do farmer and merchant at Kemys Hall, near the village of Kirkmahoe. John Gillespie wooed her in Burns's song, but she was heedless to his passionate avowal—

"To see thee in another's arms,
In love to lie and languish,
'Twad be my dead, that will be seen,
My heart wad brust wi' anguish."

She made a runaway match with a young Cumberland farmer named Whelpdale, and her happy days were numbered. In a few months she returned to her father's house. Her rare beauty and her sad story inspired the poet. He was never, in any sense, her lover, but only in a love song could he sing the charms of any woman. It was as natural for him to sing

"And ay my Chloris' dearest charm,
She says she lo'es me best of a',"

as it was for him to say of Jessie Lewars:

"Altho' thou maun never be mine,
Altho' even hope is denied;
'Tis sweeter for thee despairing,
Than aught in the world beside—Jessy."

The unfortunate "lassie wi' the lintwhite locks'

spent her last days in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh. She lies in Preston Street burying-ground, where her grave is marked by a memorial stone erected in 1901 under the auspices of the Edinburgh Ninety Burns Club.

At the end of June 1796, Burns made his last journey from Dumfries. Let us follow in his steps. The way lies southward through a richly wooded plain. We pass the Crichton Royal Institution, in which all that human skill can do is done to restore the mentally deranged. It is a strange place to possess literary associations, yet we are reminded that there Henry Scott Riddell wrote some of his poems. We shall choose the road by the shore, that we may see the "white steeds" racing over the Solway sands, and that we may visit the majestic ruins of Caerlaverock Castle. At the village of Bankend we return to the main road, and have an opportunity of seeing Old Mortality's grave in the churchyard of Caerlaverock. A few cottages by the wayside form the hamlet of Brow. The chalybeate well from which Burns drank is still there, and a venerable thorn is pointed out as that under which he used to sit; but the cottage in which he lodged has long disappeared, and local tradition has not definitely fixed its site. That row of neat, white cottages on the rising ground to the left is Clarencefield, and the farm close by is said to have been the inn in which Burns offered his watch seal as security for the payment of his last bottle of port. Thence it is scarcely a mile to the beautiful little church of Ruthwell, in which is preserved the famous Cross with Caedmon's lines on the Passion of Christ. The manse beside the church was the home of

Dr Henry Duncan, friend of Carlyle, founder of savings banks, scientist, and man of letters, as well as preacher.

To that peaceful manse Burns paid a visit during his stay at Brow. Miss Craig, who afterwards became Mrs Duncan, used to tell how he described himself as "a poor, plucked pigeon," and how his bent frame and melancholy mien proclaimed too surely that the hand of death was upon him. The rays of the afternoon sun streamed through the window and fell upon his haggard face. Miss Craig would have pulled down the blind to shield him from the light, but he looked up with a look of wistful sadness and said, "O let him shine in upon us, my dear; he will not now shine long for me."

It was too true. Two days later he returned to Dumfries. With difficulty he walked from the spring-cart to his own door, and upstairs to the bed from which he was never to rise. There is no need to recall the closing scenes—the sadness of it all; the anxiety for his wife's welfare; the fear of a prison, none the less pitiable that it was imaginary; the tender ministrations of Jessie Lewars; the sympathy of his fellow-townsmen, thinking now only of his genius, and talking of him with awe "as of some departing spirit whose voice was to gladden them no more." On the morning of the 21st of July, he died. It was fitting that his spirit should fly to meet the rising sun. As truly of Burns as of Keats, might Shelley have sung:

> "He has outsoared the shadow of our night,
> Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
> And that unrest which men miscall delight,
> Can touch him not and torture not again.

From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure ; and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey, in vain—
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn."

On Sunday evening, the poet's body was carried to the Trades' Hall in the High Street, and thence, on the following day, July 25, 1796, it was reverently borne to the churchyard of St Michael's. Dumfries has seldom seen a more impressive spectacle. Soldiers lined the street; a firing-party, with arms reversed, marched in front; the coffin was carried on the shoulders of Burns's brother-volunteers ; and to the solemn music of the "Dead March," a long procession of mourners stepped slowly down the High Street and along St Michael Street to the churchyard. The poet was buried in a grave in the north-east corner. There he lay, with two of his sons beside him, until 1815 ; and a plain freestone slab, erected by the sorrowing widow and mother, was all that marked the place. For Burns that was enough: he would have chosen that humble memorial, the simple tribute of his wife's affection, rather than the costliest monument that gold could rear ; but "an admiring and repentant people" demanded that a national memorial should mark his place of burial.

There was no room for a mausoleum beside his grave. It was therefore built in the south-east corner of the churchyard, and in the early morning of September 19, 1815, the bodies of the poet and his sons were quietly conveyed from their first resting-place to the vault beneath the mausoleum. In 1834, Jean Armour was laid beside her husband and children, and three of her

BURNS'S MAUSOLEUM.

sons, Robert, James Glencairn, and William Nicol, have since been buried there.

There is no need to describe the monument or to discuss Turnerelli's vain attempt to realise in marble the poet's conception of Coila throwing over him the mantle of inspiration. Neither Grecian monument nor Italian sculpture is required to sanctify the spot that holds the dust of Scotia's bard. Wordsworth stood beside his first grave and said that "sadness comes from out the mould where Burns is laid"; Keats stood within his mausoleum and sighed that "pain is never done"; many another poet has written words that well might form his epitaph; but better far than any of these, better than that learned "In aeternum honorem Roberti Burns," for which fortunately no place was found on his tomb, is the epitaph that he himself had penned:

"Is there a whim-inspirèd fool,
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool?—
Let him draw near;
And owre this grassy heap sing dool,
And drap a tear.

"Is there a Bard of rustic song,
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,
That weekly this aréa throng?—
O, pass not by!
But with a frater-feeling strong,
Here, heave a sigh.

"Is there a man, whose judgment clear
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs, himself, life's mad career,
Wild as the wave?
Here pause—and, thro' the starting tear,
Survey this grave.

"The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow
And softer flame ;
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
And stain'd his name.

"Reader, attend ! whether thy soul
Soars Fancy's flights beyond the pole,
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,
In low pursuit ;
Know, prudent, cautious self-control
Is wisdom's root."

APPENDIX

SUGGESTIONS FOR A TOUR IN THE LAND OF BURNS

We suppose the tour to begin at Ayr (66 minutes by rail from Glasgow). Travellers from the south may find it more convenient to begin the tour at Dumfries (7 hours from London).

1. Ayr and Alloway

(*a*) The Town of Ayr.

Burns Statue—Opposite station.
Tam o' Shanter Inn—High Street.
Wallace Tower—High Street.
Auld Kirk—High Street.
Auld Brig.
Fort (St John's) Tower.
Cromwell's Fort—Remains of wall.
View from pier or esplanade.

(*b*) Electric Car to Alloway.

Burns's Cottage
Alloway Kirk.
The Monument.
Auld Brig o' Doon.

To visit Mount Oliphant, drive from Ayr (4 miles).

2. Carrick

(*a*) Ayr to Maybole (9 miles).
In Maybole—
Castle.
Auld College.
Knox's house.

(*b*) Maybole to Kirkoswald (4¼ miles).
Crossraguel Abbey.
Kirkoswald Churchyard.
Turnberry (3 miles from Kirkoswald).

(*c*) Kirkoswald to Ayr (16 miles).
Culzean Castle—(Admission to grounds on Wednesdays by ticket from Estate Office, Maybole).
Dunure Castle.
Heads of Ayr.
Greenan Castle.

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3. The Ayr Valley

(*a*) Drive from Ayr to Tarbolton (7¼ miles).
In Tarbolton—
Masonic Lodge, with relics.
Burns Tavern, with masonic relics.
"Dr Hornbook's" house.
Old Masonic Lodge.

(*b*) Tarbolton to Mauchline (4¼ miles).
Willie's Mill, to the right, where road crosses the Fail.
Lochlea, to the left, 2½ miles from Tarbolton.
Mossgiel, 1¼ miles from Mauchline, on left, easily recognised by tall hedge in front of house.
National Homes, ½ mile from Mauchline.
Mauchline—Poosie Nansie's Hostelry.
Nanse Tinnock's.
Burns's house.
Mauchline Castle.
Churchyard.

(*c*) Short circular tour (about 5 miles) from Mauchline, by Howford Bridge, Catrine, and Braes of Ballochmyle.

(*d*) Return to Ayr (11 miles)
By Failford and
Castle of Montgomerie.

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4. Irvine and Kilmarnock

(*a*) Ayr to Irvine (25 minutes by rail).
In Irvine—
Birthplaces of Galt and Montgomery.
Heckling shop and house in which Burns lived (Glasgow Vennel).

(*b*) Irvine to Kilmarnock (20 minutes by rail).
Kilmarnock—
Old Printing Office in Waterloo Street.
Laigh Kirk—Tam Samson's grave.
Tam Samson's house.
Monument in Kay Park.
Kilmarnock House.
Dean Castle.

(*c*) Drive from Kilmarnock to Newmilns (8 miles).
Loudoun Kirk.
Loudoun Castle.
Loudoun Manse.
Patie's Mill.

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5. Kilmarnock to Dumfries (70 minutes by rail)

Dumfries—
Burns's houses—Bank Street and Burns Street.
Globe Inn—High Street.
Commercial Inn—(Prince Charlie's room), High Street.
Burns Statue.
Observatory—Maxwelltown.
Lincluden Abbey—Walk by river side.
Mausoleum—St Michael's Churchyard.

6. Drive from Dumfries to Ellisland

By Maxwelltown side of Nith to—
Holywood.
Ellisland—200 yards to right (5¾ miles from Dumfries).
Friars' Carse—also to the right.
Auldgirth Bridge (7¾ miles).

Return on east side of Nith by
Dalswinton.

Total journey, about 17 miles.

(5 and 6). The cyclist should go by train from Kilmarnock to Sanquhar. The ride (26½ miles) from Sanquhar to Dumfries is easy, and on the way are—

Sanquhar Castle,
Drumlanrig Castle,
Thornhill,
Friars' Carse, and
Ellisland.

The following excursions may be made from Dumfries :—

(*a*) Sweetheart Abbey (7 miles).

(*b*) Irongray and Routen Bridge (7 miles).

(*c*) Caerlaverock, Brow Well, and Ruthwell (17 miles).

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